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EAGLE

THE WORKS OF

LAURENCE STERNE

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 223

Laurence Sterne. After a Painting by Carmontelle

THE WORKS OF

LAURENCE STERNE

VOLUME TWELVE

THE LIFE

OF

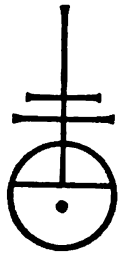
LAURENCE STERNE

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD

VOLUME II

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILBUR L. CROSS



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LIFE OF STERNE

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MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH SALONS

LIFE OF STERNE

CHAPTER I

MR STERNE IN THE FRENCH SALONS

AFTER six weeks more we find him still lingering at Paris: he had been introduced to 'one half of their best goddesses, and in a month more shall be admitted to the shrines of the other half.' His odd, eccentric style of speech and manner had been much relished, and being now firmly established, and knowing his ground, he gave full scope to his humour. He used to 'Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, "and talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days," and to all sorts of people.' He could boast that he had 'converted many into Shandeism.' Scraps of his speech and general oddity struck on the Minister Choiseul's ear, who was heard asking (in better French than Mr. Sterne reported it),

'*Qui le diable est ce homme là?*' '*Ce Chevalier Shandy.*' He had, he was told, heard of those 'ten thousand things I cannot write,' and of 'those thousand things I do which cut no figure but in the doing.' A greater compliment still was paid him than merely exciting the curiosity of a prime minister. The Duke of Orleans had formed an odd collection of the portraits of some 'odd men,' which made a sort of department in his famous collection; and an artistic gentleman who lived with him, got Mr Sterne to sit for a full-length, to add to the eccentric catalogue. It was considered a most 'expressive' likeness.* It was intended that there should be an etching done of this picture.

Not many years ago this portrait came to light, and a chromo print of it was published by Messrs Colnaghi. They informed me that some time since they became possessed of the collection alluded to, and that the name of 'the gentleman who lived with him' was Carmontelle, who also painted Garrick. Among the rest was this characteristic likeness of Yorick, painted with much force and

* This portrait, however, is not to be found in the gorgeously illustrated 'Orleans Gallery.'

quaintness. The figure is about five or six inches high, drawn in profile, dressed in scrupulous black and elegant lace ruffles. The face is rather old for a man of his age, but there is no mistaking the likeness, and there is a Voltairean expression in the profile, as well as in the spare figure. He would seem to be standing on the terrace of the Palais Royal, and the painting itself has much merit from its spirit and the Meissonier-like treatment of the whole. The picture has been reproduced by the process of photo-gravure, and the colouring is so good that it may be readily mistaken for the original. We have now, therefore, several excellent likenesses of Sterne, including the well-known Sir Joshua, the capital bust by Nollekens, of which I have a small copy, and this little work of Carmontelle's.

Garrick was naturally anxious to know the state of the French stage. That tremendous question of the union of the two theatres was now in everyone's mouth. Scraps and snatches of green-room scandal absorbed the wrapt attention of the great metropolis. But the union of the theatres was made almost a party question.

Clairon also welcomed all the world, and Mr Sterne, to her house on Thursdays, 'when *she gives to eat* (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry.' She more astonished than delighted Mr Sterne. Her style was often the usual French declamatory pattern; which it requires French training to appreciate. 'I cannot bear preaching,' he said; 'I fancy I got a surfeit of it in my younger days.'

On the 19th of March, he wrote to his friend that he was to be entertained that night by going specially to see a tragedy damned. 'Peace be with it and the gentle brain that made it.' Clairon, at first disgusted with her part, with all the fitfulness of an actress, had now taken it up with '*fureur*.' It was at last fixed for this 19th of March, when Mr Sterne was anticipating such a pleasant evening — but at the last moment it was withdrawn.

The fortnight, which at the end of January was to have been the furthest term of his stay, had stretched to the middle of April, and he had not moved. He was enraptured with the place and his reception. He was 'charmed' and '*extasié*,' for at this time everything here was hyperbolised, 'and if a woman is but simply pleased 'tis *je suis*

charmée, and if she is charmed 'tis nothing less than she is *ravi*-sh'd. . . .' He could enjoy his amusements with far more relish — for his short stay had already been attended with wonderful results upon his health. 'Your prayer for me of *rosy health*,' he wrote to his friend, 'is heard. If I stay here for three or four months, I shall return more than reinstated.' It does, indeed, seem likely, that the air of Paris in the depth of winter, with the unwholesome accompaniments of balls and suppers, would have had a very serious influence on his physical constitution. It was the wonderfully mercurial tone of his spirits which, in a new scene, and among new and livelier objects, carried him triumphantly over the drawbacks of a rude climate and an enfeebled chest.

The Lent brought with it 'a vile suspension' and utter interruption of all dramatic amusements; and then, to Mr Sterne's delight the run of plays and operas set in again. Still, it was the tragedy vein that was in favour: and the stilted declamation of the French school. 'Here the comic actors were never so low — the tragedians hold up their heads — in all senses.' They had no versatile

actor who could play 'Abel Drugger' and a gloomy tragedy the same evening, like '*one little man*'—who supported 'the theatrical world like a David Atlas.'

This compliment accompanied a little request for patronage in Garrick's own department. Mr Sterne had met a literary 'lady of talent' in Paris, who had taken the trouble of translating and adapting Diderot's drama of *Le Fils Naturel*. He does not give her name, but we can have no difficulty in identifying her. For some three or four years later there was a certain Irish 'Mrs E. Griffith' persecuting Mr Garrick in London on the score of this very 'Fils Naturel'; piteously importuning him in many letters, to bring out both this and other adapted dramas of Diderot's. Mr Sterne did not think very highly of it, considering the speeches too long and savouring of 'preaching,' and, strange to say, he objected to it because it had 'too much sentiment.' He not only interceded with Garrick, but also tried to induce Becket, his own publisher, to take it up, apparently without success. Mr Sterne had the disagreeable duty of reading through the 'sentiment' and the 'preaching'

—which must have been out of compliment to Diderot, whose friend she was.

Very many were the 'great houses' at which Mr Sterne was made welcome. On March the 14th, the Baron de Bagge gave a concert, with the choicest music and company that could be got in Paris, and here the odd English Mr Shandy was to be seen. On the following night, the Prince de Conti had a party, and Mr Sterne was there also. There was an opulent Farmer-General, who kept a standing corps of musicians and actors in his house, and gave concerts and plays alternately to the noblest persons in Paris; this gentleman made Mr Sterne free of his table and his entertainments while in Paris. His guest wrote home how he had been *fêted* by a M. Popignière—but the true name of the 'Farmer' was Popelinière. No doubt he went about in his loose, pleasant, Shandean way, talking to M. Diderot and other French friends of the 'M. Popignière' he was going to dine with on that evening—perhaps to their amusement. At this time, and even to the end, Mr Sterne was blundering terribly in his French.

In this new whirl he did not forget those

he had left behind. He found time to send to his bankers, day after day, for letters from his wife, and was greatly distressed at their irregular arrival. He found time also to write long, affectionate and gossiping letters, in his most graphic, dramatic style — which were to amuse the lonely tenants of Coxwould. He described for them the great fire that had broken out during the fair of St Germain, which had consumed all the wooden booths in a few hours, with all their contents, and how 'hundreds of unhappy people are now going crying along the streets ruined totally.'

He sends them another little *croquis* hastily done — but quite a picture in itself. He has been 'these three mornings to hear one Père Clément, the famous preacher, who delights me much. . . . Most excellent, indeed; his matter sound, and to the purpose — his manner more than theatrical, and suggests, both in his action and delivery, Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here. He has infinite variety, and he keeps up the attention by it wonderfully — his pulpit oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself — goes a little way, then rises by a gradation of four

steps, each of which he profits by as his discourse leads him. In short, 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there was no less than five or six actors on it together.' Mr Sterne, no doubt, was wishing for such a stage down at Coxwould pulpit, and the 'dramatic discourses of Mr Yorick' would have exactly suited this scene.

The true Paris cold had set in fiercely, and he talks cosily of his French wood-fires. 'I shall never burn coals, I fear, again.' He pleasantly lays out that when they get back again to Coxwould, they will always have, at least, a mixture both of wood and coal. He tells them of his progress in French, and that he speaks it 'fast and fluent, but incorrect both in accent and phrase:' (there is something in this unartificial confession very pleasing, and even significant, when we come to estimate his character,) 'but the French say, I am most surprising for the time,' a compliment very often paid by that polite people to encourage English students of their tongue.

Still, though marvellously recovered and showing a colour in his cheeks now though

he 'came with no more than is in a dish-clout,' he was beginning to think seriously of the South of France. It had been better such a journey had been thought of some months before; and had the winter just gone by been spent at Toulouse or Montpellier, instead of at Paris, he might indeed have been 'fortified in my inner man, beyond all danger of relapsing.' He had grown very intimate, too, with the younger Crebillon — the free-and-easy author of the *Sofa* and *Les Egaremens*, whom a romantic English girl was by-and-by to come over and marry, incited by the perusal of those questionable romances. So intimate indeed was Mr Sterne and the French Sentimentalist, that the result was the extraordinary and truly Shandean contract which, if it had been carried out, would have been one of the oddest literary curiosities conceivable. It was agreed that he was to write 'an expostulatory letter' to his English friend 'upon the indecorums of *T. Shandy*,' to which Sterne was to *riposter* 'by recrimination upon the liberties in his own works — these are to be printed together, Crebillon against Sterne — Sterne against Crebillon, the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided.

This is good Swiss policy.' The convention was, however, never carried out. Perhaps the Frenchman was lazy, as Mr Sterne, indeed, anticipated he might be. More to be regretted is his new companionship with such men. Fresh from Hall Stevenson, and the free men of London and Crazy Castle, he was flung into the worst circle of Frenchmen — such as Crebillon and his friends. It is but too plain that he had left his bands and cassock behind him at Coxwould, and had voluntarily abnegated any such reverence as social courtesy might pay to his clerical character. But, at the same time, it must be borne in mind that there was but one society and one circle in Paris; and into this all entered. Here was to be found Garrick, who wrote home boastfully to his friends, 'We had a fine laugh at Baron d'Holbach's, where you dined once, about the wicked company I keep. I am always with that set.' There has never been any question about Garrick's propriety; and harder measure should not be dealt out to Sterne than to him. But though this bit of *persiflage*, as he called it, was never written, he thought of Crebillon five or six years afterwards, and put his novel, *Les*

Egaremens, in the hands of Madame R——'s maid, whom he stopped to ask the way to the Hôtel de Modène.

Among the French in Paris he gave full reins to his natural spirits: and to them his peculiar temper seems to have been very acceptable. That curious mixture of sentiment and humour which is eminently French, was his characteristic also. 'I laugh till I also cry,' he wrote, 'and in the same tender moments cry till I laugh; I Shandy it more than ever.' This Shandying was clearly a sort of burlesque speech — a kind of grotesque exaggeration, and leaning to what is called 'galimathias' — also very French.

In various portions of his writings he has dropped a hint or two in reference to success in society, which, coming from one who had himself succeeded, are very precious. 'We get forward in the world,' he tells us in his *Sentimental Journey*, 'not so much by doing services as receiving them;' a true principle which is yet only a basis.

It is plain his social gifts were very great: and no one could tell a story with more spirit and effect. A specimen of this 'Shandying' has come down, and we are privileged to stand

behind his chair at the dinner Lord Tavistock gave on the 4th of June * to the few English then left in Paris, in honour of the King's birthday. A kind of diplomatic factotum named Dutens, who had just come from Turin with Mr Needham, was of the party, and found himself seated between Lord Berkeley and a tall, thin, odd-looking man, whom he presently found out to be '*le fameux Sterne*' — the English Rabelais. There was a good deal of toasting and drinking '*à l'Anglaise.*' The conversation naturally turned on Turin, where a good many of the party were going; when Mr Sterne asked his neighbour if he happened to know a M. Dutens when he was at that Court. The Frenchman, with a Frenchman's readiness, answered that he knew the gentleman very intimately indeed; at which reply the whole company began to laugh. Mr Sterne, with less quickness than might be expected, imputed this hilarity to the recollection of some ridiculous foibles of the absent diplomat, and fancied he saw a good opening for a little 'Shandying.' 'I believe he is rather odd,' said Mr Sterne.

* This may have been the dinner alluded to by Walpole at which some eighty English sat down.

'Quite an original,' said the other. Stimulated by fresh laughter, Mr Sterne began to sketch in pleasantly an imaginary Dutens, and told some comic stories, with good effect, which M. Dutens, then present, gravely corroborated. The latter went away by-and-by, when the company told Mr Sterne of his mistake, and warned him that the caricatured diplomatist was only restrained by the courtesies of society from at once resenting the insult, and would most likely take prompt measures in the morning. Next day he was waited on by the English Rabelais, who came to excuse himself for his little *bêtise*, and made many apologies; to be only at once reassured by Dutens, who told him that 'if he only knew the man as well as *he* did, he would have said something a good deal more unflattering.' Mr Sterne was much pleased with this Shandean answer, embraced the other, and went his way.

It is M. Dutens himself who tells the story, and tells it pleasantly. It *is* a good story; such as might be told of Sheridan or Theodore Hook, and laughed at heartily. There had been, besides, a good deal of wine drunk '*à l'Anglaise*' at a time when it was the fashion

to celebrate various anniversaries with deep draughts. Mr Sterne's sketches could not have been very personal or offensive, else the Frenchman would have readily stopped his further progress; for in France it is ridicule that kills. Finally, Mr Sterne would readily have known that his gown was sufficient protection against a cartel; and therefore his voluntary apology in the morning, for his unconscious discourtesy, was, if anything, rather creditable to him. It is the hard fate of Sterne that some such little commentary as this must attend on nearly every incident of his life; for nearly every incident of his life has been curiously distorted and misrepresented.

He was now looking forward eagerly to a meeting with his wife and his daughter Lydia. That 'sad asthma,' which perhaps he felt his daughter 'Lyd' had inherited from him, made change of air indispensable, and in the month of June they were getting ready for the journey. The favourite stock charge against him has been this trading in printed sentimentality, with an utter deficiency in the genuine affections and practical domestic sympathy. But no one who glances over

the shower of letters in which this petted child of French society thinks, and plans, and plots, and repeats his injunctions over and over again — anxiously racks his brain for fresh injunctions, all to help this wife and child safely on their road — can ever venture, with decency, to repeat the charge. This remarkable series of letters does not merely negatively vindicate him from unkindness, but establishes him as the most affectionate of husbands and fathers. Indeed, his love for his 'Lydia' — in this so curiously resembling that of Wilkes for *his* 'Polly' — should redeem many sins and imperfections. It is even a significant token of his feeling, that he was not content to wait for their arrival to present Mrs Sterne with a couple of snuff-boxes (one set in garnets, the other decorated with his portrait), but must send them off at once by a friend.

Paris even then was scarcely a cheap capital; and his long winter campaigning had begun to tell a little on his finances. He had most likely received advances on the sale of the new *Shandys*, and he was now writing home, pressing his publisher, Becket, to take the copyright off his hands. His letter is

business-like and comprehensive, taking in every point likely to be raised in the discussion of the arrangement. He is willing to 'make a handsome allowance for all charges, and the drawbacks on your side.' He then rather timorously hazards a supposition that 'there are 3000 (copies) disposed of,' and hopes the remainder will be sold off by the beginning of next year. (The copies were in truth going off a little slowly, but there was no very marked falling off in the sale.) Any little balances were to be paid over to Mrs Sterne when she was passing through London, who would give her receipt for the money. She was, in short, to negotiate the matter — 'the sale of the *Shandys* — and then the copyright,' he wrote to her, 'Mark to keep these things distinct in your head. But Becket I have ever found to be a man of probity.'

There was other business which was to be directed also by Mrs Sterne. A certain common near Stillington or Sutton, and bearing the odd name of Rascal, was about being inclosed; and there was besides a little transaction that looks very much as though money was being raised upon this little property.

At least a bureau had to be broken open to get at certain 'deeds' of Mr Sterne's. Later, a power of attorney came over to Paris for Mr Sterne's signature. She was also to look out for some one to do Mr Sterne's official 'visitations' at Pocklington.

He seems to have exhausted himself devising means to make their expedition comfortable, and provide against the annoyances of what was then a serious journey. He bought them a chaise from a friend of his, a Mr Thornhill, who let him have it almost for a song. A gentleman, Mr R——, who was going to travel in Italy, saw it, and offered him thirty guineas over what he had paid. He sent it down to Calais, where it was to wait for them. He then got Mr Colebrook, the 'Minister of Swisserland's' Secretary, to write to the governor of the Calais Customs in their favour. He found out 'a good-natured kind of a trader,' a horse-dealer, who was always on the road between London and Paris, and 'who was infinitely friendly,' in the same office to another lady, 'and nursed her on ship-board, and defended her by land with great goodwill,' and secured his useful aid. He sent away letters, one, as it were, on the heels of

the other, to supply little hints that he had forgotten. The heat was then raging. In Paris 'twas as hot as Nebuchadnezzar's oven,' and he was nervously anxious about the travellers. He earnestly warns them about 'heating their blood' in travelling, and enjoins them to 'come *tout doucement.*' And again he cautions them, 'for God's sake rise early, and gallop always in the cool.' So hot was it then that the 'gentleman of Fortune,' who was about Mr Sterne's chaise, had to be on his road at four in the morning, and dare not travel after nine. He wrote letters to those friends who had been kind to them in London. He sent them their passport. He thought even of little matters of toilette scarcely within his province. 'Lydia must have two slight *negligées;* as for painted linens, buy them in town, as they will be more admired because English, than French.' He consulted a lady friend on the nice point of the proper place for buying silks; found out that they were 'very beautiful and cheap here, as blonds, gauzes,' etc.; and wisely checked an imprudent overloading of their mails with things which could be procured as readily at the end of their journey. Sixty guineas he reckoned

they must lay out in Paris on this important department. 'For in this country,' he wrote truly, and at the present time it is part of the false homage which the goddess of Paris exacts from her children, 'nothing must be spared for the back; and if you dine on an onion, and lay in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your clothes, according to which you are well or ill looked on.'

He thought of their providing themselves with some useful work-box articles, 'for they have bad pins and vile needles here, so bring for yourself and some for presents.' Tea was fair enough up to Dover, but they should take a little to serve from Calais to Paris. Mrs Sterne was addicted to the minor vice of snuff-taking, and fond of Scotch snuff. He advised her to bring a little mill to grind it, or even she could get her valet to do so, 'twill keep him out of mischief.' She was to bring also 'a strong bottle screw,' for whatever 'scrub we may hire,' as butler, coachman, etc., '*to uncork us our Frontiniac.*'

Another pleasant domestic picture, the motive of which is plainly to draw off Mrs Sterne's mind from the thought of her journey and its discomforts. He tells them they

will be in raptures with their new carriage. They are to give him a seat. 'You will wonder all the way how I am to find room in it — 'tis by what the coachmakers here call a cave, which is a second bottom added to that you set your feet on, which lets the person who sits over against you down, with his knees to your ankles. . . . Lyd and I will enjoy this by turns; sometimes I shall take a bidet (a little post-horse) and scamper on before; at other times I shall sit in fresco upon the arm-chair without doors, and one way or other will do very well.' A charming little picture, done with a genial, good-natured touch, that could only be guided by a warm and affectionate heart. Again, 'I wish when you come here, in case the weather is too hot to travel, *you could think it pleasant* to go the Spaw for four or six weeks, where we should live for half the money we should spend at Paris. After that we should take the sweetest season of the vintage, and go to the south of France; but *we will put our heads together, and you shall do just as you please in this and in everything which depends on me*, for I am a being perfectly contented when others are pleased; to bear and forbear will ever be my maxim,

only I fear the heat through a journey of five hundred miles for you and my Lydia more than for myself.'

It was the 18th or 20th of June before they were ready to set out. His letters still came showering in on them. He snatched at the very last moment, in the hope of catching them 'just as you are on the wing.' He wishes to give courage and encouragement.

'You have done everything well,' he tells his wife, 'with regard to our Sutton and Stillington affairs, and left things in the best channel.' As soon as all this London business is off his mind, 'everything else will be a step of pleasure, and by the time you have got half-a-dozen stages, you will set up your pipes, and sing *Te Deum* together *as you whisk it along*.' He has a gold watch ready for 'my Lydia.' 'Write, and tell me something of everything. I long to see you both, my dear wife and child.'

He then huddles together a few more hasty little cautions. No wonder he should say, 'I have almost drain'd my brains dry upon the subject.' They were to take care and look to their luggage on the Dover road. They were to buy a good strong chain, and have

their trunks fastened on in front, 'for fear of a dog's trick.' They were to take three days on the French roads, for fear of heating themselves; and drink small Rhenish, to keep them cool 'that is, if you like it.' They would find a letter for them at Calais, at the Lyon d'Argent,* to cheer them up on coming out of the packet. He bids them give his love to his friend Fothergill (of the Cathedral), and 'to those true friends which envy has spared me. For the rest, *laisser passer*.' He bids them live well, and deny themselves nothing on the road. He prays 'God in Heaven prosper and go along with you.' He bids her 'kiss my Lydia,' for him. Then, finally encourages them in this sensible, stirring fashion: 'Now, my dears, once more pluck up your spirits; trust in God, in me, and in yourselves. Write instantly, and tell me you triumph over all fears. Tell me Lydia is better, and a helpmate to you. You say she grows like me. Let her show me that she does so in her contempt of small dangers, and fighting against the apprehension of them, which is better still. . . . Dear Bess, I have a thousand wishes, but have a hope for every one of them.

* Grandsires'.

You shall sing the *jubilate*. So God bless you, adieu. Believe me, your affectionate,

'L. STERNE.'

Then, in a postscript, he thoughtfully epitomises all his directions.

'*Memorandum*:—Bring watch-chains, tea-kettles, knives, cookery-book, etc.

'You will smile at this last article. So adieu.

'At Dover, the Cross Keys; at Calais, at the Lyon d'Argent.'

And so they set out. Never were travellers more diligently instructed. Would any expert in what may be termed the handwriting of the human heart, with these letters before him, hesitate to attribute them to an affectionate husband, and to a careful father; or to a mind that did not limit itself to profitless, sentimental fancies, but travelled further in considerate and practical directions?

It was quite necessary that for all considerations he should have a formal extension of his leave; and he therefore addressed to his Archbishop one of those sensible letters so very different from the tone of the ordinary ones he was in the habit of writing to his

own merry familiars. No one could so happily assume an air of mixed gravity, respect — with, at the same time, a hint of disguised Shandeism — when he came to address a superior.*

'PARIS, *May* 10*th*, 1762.

'MY LORD, — Mr Kilner, my curate at Coxwould, who is a candidate for Priest's Orders at the ensuing Ordination, will deliver this into your Grace's hands. He has served the cure seven months, during which time I have been out of the kingdom, so have so little personal knowledge of him, that I can only certify to his character from the accounts I have had from others: he came extreamly well recommended as a scholar, and a moral man, to me from the clergyman he last assisted; and by all I have heard from time to time of his behaviour in the discharge of his duty in the parish of Coxwould since, he has given neither the parishioners or myself cause to complain. This is all I can take upon me to certify to y^r^ Grace in his behalf; but he will have the honour to produce certificates

* This letter to Archbishop Hay Drummond, hitherto unpublished with others to be given further on in this work, I owe to Mr Hoggard of York.

from the neighbouring clergy, which I hope will give your Grace all possible satisfaction.

'When I arrived here, the Faculty thought I could not live a month. I have lived, however, my Lord, 5 months, and in a gradual restoration of my health, so that I was setting my face towards home, when I was detain'd unhappily by the ill health of my daughter, who, at 14, is fallen into a confirmed asthma; for which she is advised to winter at Toulouse or Nice, as the only chance to save her. Whilst I was soliciting passports for her and my wife, I was unhappily myself attack'd with a fever, which has ended the worst way it could for me, in a *defluxion poitrine*, as the French physicians call it. It is generally fatal to weak lungs, so that I have lost in ten days all I have gain'd since I came here; and, from a relaxation of my lungs, have lost my voice entirely, that 'twill be much if I ever quite recover it. This evil sends me directly to Toulouse, for w^ch^ I set out from this place the moment my family arrives. The D. of Choiseul has treated me with great indulgence as to my stay in France, and has this moment sent me passports for my family to join me.

I beg y^r^ Grace's pardon for the liberty in representing my situation and that of my family. Y^r^ Grace's humanity, I am sure, will take part in my distresses, and that prompts me to lay them open. I wish y^r^ Grace and y^r^ family all health and all happiness in this world and a better.

'I am, my Lord,

'Y^r^ dutiful and ever obliged servant,

'LAURENCE STERNE.'

While the Yorkshire travellers were on their road, the faithful guide who had been so anxiously forecasting all their wants met with an accident, which went nigh to depriving him of the pleasure he was so fondly anticipating. One night during the first days of July, just after he had gone to bed, one of those unlucky vessels in his lungs gave way — exactly what had befallen him when an undergraduate at Cambridge years before. Before morning he had nearly 'bled the bed full.' A surgeon was sent for, whom he got to bleed him in both arms. 'This saved me,' said Mr Sterne, who had faith in the strange Sangrado doctrines of the time. He had, however, a narrow escape — had to lie on his back for

some time without venturing to whisper—but was out in a week. He was very feeble after his attack, and his face must have gone back to the old 'dish-clout' hue. He was now indeed paying forfeit, just as he had done for his London campaign.

THE FIRST 'SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY'

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST 'SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY'

AT last, on a Thursday in July, the travellers reached Paris. They had a rapid and delightful journey, and were delighted with travelling. None of the anticipated troubles had presented themselves. Mr Sterne had secured apartments for them, and was rejoiced to have them with him. He at once sat down to write a grateful letter of thanks to the business-friend who had been kind to them in London; and with Mrs Sterne's assistance chose an Indian taffety, which he sent off the very next morning, as a little present for the business-friend's wife. Mrs Stanhope, 'the Consul-General of Algiers'' wife, took charge of the parcel. Such little acts as these, though not very much to be insisted on, show a thoughtfulness, and a sense of the practical kindnesses of life, very inconsistent with our notion of a careless, sentimental man.

The young girl, as may be conceived, was in raptures with the wonderful city of Paris. She could not be torn from the window all day long. But, to her father's delight, she chafed sorely against the necessary torment of being 'frizzled.' But this operation was *de rigueur*, and there was a *grande armée* of *Friseurs* in Paris. It was the fashionable faith. Her little petulance amused him, and he hoped she would always continue the same 'child of nature.' She must have been then a *piquante*, bright-looking girl, but she did not continue to be that child of nature.

They did not remain very long in Paris: scarcely a fortnight. It was time to be moving southwards. That late accident was serious; and the hurrying about which he mentions, possibly sight-seeing, could scarcely suit a newly-repaired blood vessel. He had even the stimulant of figuring before the police, the hero of a truly Shandean adventure.

He was going out some seven miles beyond Paris, and hired a little carriage, which he was to drive himself. With characteristic carelessness, he never looked to the quality of the animal that was to take him so far, until he

was fairly on the road, when he discovered that it might have been a yoke-fellow for the sorry hack that Yorick used to ride. He had not gone half his journey, when the poor beast dropped down dead in the shafts. It was an embarrassing situation, and there is certainly a ludicrousness in the picture of Yorick holding the reins of the animal. No doubt d'Holbach and the merry men of his set laughed loudly over the story. But they must have been more amused when the '*Chevalier Shandy*' was taken before the police. He began his defence in French, and pleaded for himself and for the poor over-driven brute, who had been worked the whole day previous, without a morsel of corn or hay, 'by a worse beast than himself, namely, his master.' But that French, which he fancied he could 'splutter' so famously, failed on this public occasion. In his odd way, he said he 'might as well have whistled' — he then — always Shandean — fell back on his Latin, and finally, by dint of a shower of words, and those jerks and gestures of his, forced his judge to do him justice, 'no common thing, by the way, in France.'

About the 24th or 25th of July, in the

midst of the furious French heats, the like of which 'the oldest Frenchman' could not call to mind, the Sterne family started on their journey. So distressing was the sun, that it took them three weeks to reach Toulouse. They suffered so acutely, being 'toasted, roasted, grill'd, stew'd, and carbonated on one side or other all the way,' that he could not bear to talk of it afterwards. It was an expensive journey — too much so for their not very abundant finances. The posting regulations were the most arbitrary and costly that could be conceived.*

Mr Sterne began to write his *Journey* almost as soon as he reached his destination, with French pictures and associations about him, and when the memory of all he had seen was still fresh. The result is some charming sketches, with the bloom and fragrance of the romantic south upon them, full of life and delicacy and colour. These are to be found

* A party of four travelling in their own carriage, were forced to take six horses and two postilions; if a servant (in addition) was sitting behind, the traveller was not indeed compelled to take an extra horse, but had to pay for one. He had also to pay double fare for the first post out of Paris, double fare on passing Fontainebleau, — homage to the King of France if he should be staying there — and also at Lyons. 'Royal Posts,' as they were complimentarily termed, met the traveller at various quarters of France.

in the seventh volume of *Tristram;* and the traveller who has been down south, and thinks fondly of Tarrascon, and Beaucaire, and Nismes, and Avignon — those names so full of music — and the grape districts of Lunel, and the *Côte rotie* has only to turn over a page or two of Mr Sterne's *Sketch Book*, and he will feel the *tone* of the place stealing back on him marvellously. In his letters, too, Mr Sterne gave little pictures, which show (as has been here so often insisted on) what a literal romance of his life he meant *Tristram* to be.

We can follow them all along the road as they 'scamper it away to the banks of the Garonne;' through Fontainebleau, 'where any English gentleman of fashion may be accommodated with a nag or two, to partake of the sport, taking sure care not to out-gallop the king.' To *Sens* — ('you may dispatch it in a word, *'tis an archiepiscopal see*'); through Auxerre, where he took my Uncle Toby and Trim, and Mr Shandy, into the Abbey of St Germain, and where the young Benedictine (Mr Sterne always touches his monks very gracefully) pointed them out the tombs of St Maxima and St Optat, this latter, the

name which Mr Shandy thought so appropriate for a bishop;* and through Lyons, where they saw the wonderful mechanism of the great clock of 'Lippius of Basil.' All the way the terrific heat accompanied them; from Paris to Nismes they did not see a cloud 'half as broad as a twenty-four sols piece.' Even at nights they suffered cruelly, being 'eat up at night by bugs and other unswept-out vermin, the legal inhabitants (if length of possession gives right) at every inn we lay at.' Still his health was mending with every stage, he 'had left death, the Lord knows how far behind me. . . . Still I fled him, but I fled him cheerfully; as he lag'd, every step he lost softened his looks.'

At Lyons came their first misfortune, where their bargain of a chaise broke down, almost at the gate; and they had to make an inglorious entry into that stately city in a cart, 'higgle-piggledy with the baggage.' This disaster was turned to profit, for 'a pert vamping chaise undertaker' bought their shattered carriage on the spot; so they

* Dr Ferrier quite missed the point of the allusion, which would indeed escape most readers. Sterne was thinking of the Yorkshire diocese, where the Archbishop had certain rights of nomination known as 'Options,' and which Sydney Smith dealt with long after in his pleasant *Plymley Letters*.

were now to take boat and have a charming voyage down the Rhone as far as Avignon, through the Côte Rotie and Hermitage, past the old cities of Orange, Vienne, Valence, and Montelimar. Even now the traveller, swept away southward by the Marseilles Express, looks down wistfully, from the great railway bridge, on the Rhone winding and glistening below him like molten silver, thinks of the towns with melodious names that dot its banks.

By the road it was very many posts to Avignon — the journey by water would cost them but nine livres each. The boat went that afternoon, and to fill in the time he consulted his *Itinerary* ('God knows what,' he says — but we know it was La Force's) for the sights of Lyons. The great clock, however, he was told by one of the minor canons as he was entering the west door, 'was all out of joint, and had not gone for some years.' The great *Chinese History*, in thirty volumes, at the Jesuits, he could not see; and the 'tomb of the Lovers,' about which he was very enthusiastic, he found levelled by order of the corporate authorities. He was just sallying out to visit this shrine under the guidance of

his *valet-de-place*, François, 'and having called for my bill — as it was uncertain whether I should return to my inn — I paid it; I had, moreover, given the maid ten sous, and was just receiving the *dernier compliments** of Monsieur le Blanc, for a pleasant voyage down the Rhone, when I was stopped at the gate.' Never was a more welcome interruption, for to it we owe the charming picture of the poor Ass, who 'had just turned in with a couple of large panniers upon his back, to collect eleemosynary turnip-tops,' and to whom he gave ten macaroons. Then came the droll incident of his lost 'remarks,' — a hint of which has taken place, but which is almost too farcical to be true in details; which 'remarks' were traced from the pocket of the chaise, where they had been forgotten, to the chaise-vamper's wife, who had her hair in '*papilliotes*' (as he calls them). 'Oh, Seigneur,' said he, 'you have got all my remarks upon your head Madam.'

He 'just got time enough to the boat' to save his passage; and before he had sailed a

* This is some of Mr Sterne's bad French; more of the same imperfect sort will be met with in the text further on.

hundred yards, 'the Rhone and Sâone met together, and carried me down merrily betwixt them.' He merely passed through 'Avignion,' saw 'an old house in which the Duke of Ormond resided,' and recommenced his land travels. The ladies went in a carriage, he followed on a mule, with a servant upon a horse, and 'the owner of both striding his way before us with a long gun upon his shoulder and a sword under his arm, lest peradventure we should run away with his cattle.'*

And from Avignon he began to move slowly through the richer plains of Languedoc, passing by Beaucaire, with its quaint, curious fair, which flourishes to this hour, and which the elder Dumas passed by, in *his* pleasant Southern travels over the same ground. We get pleasant glimpses and pictures as we follow Mr Sterne lounging it along upon his mule. It was near Beaucaire that the hind

* At Avignon, too, when dismounting, he called in a free-and-easy way to a man at the inn door: — 'Prithee, friend, take hold of my mule for a moment, for I want to pull off one of my jack-boots which hurts my heel;' who calmly did as he was desired, and proved to be a Marquis. Curious to say, just such an adventure befell Mr Smollet a year or two later on *his* travels. But it is worth comparing the delicate tribute to this piece of genuine politeness insinuated by Sterne, and the gruff, surly, growling acknowledgment of his mistake on the part of the Scotchman.

wheel came off the chaise: it was a sultry day, and about noon, and they were in the midst of a huge plain, some four miles from either tree or shrub. The whole party had to sit in this desert for five hours upon a gravelly road, without a drop of water. The postilions, 'too dough-hearted,' began to cry bitterly over their misfortune. Nothing could be done. 'By Heaven,' said Mr Sterne, stripping off his coat and waistcoat with wonderful energy, 'something *shall* be done, or I'll thrash you both within an inch of your lives.' He made them ride off 'like devils,' to the post for a cart. The travellers had to wait there five hours, under the sun in that sandy spot, until they returned. The roads were swarming with people for the Beaucaire fair. Going or returning, they saw the luckless family sitting at the roadside, with their broken-down chaise, and a mountain of baggage which weighed ten quintals. Every one of the simple peasants stopped a moment to ask them if they were going to the fair. 'No wonder,' quoth Mr Sterne, grumbling *sotto voce;* 'we have goods enough!'

After all was set right again, he went forward on his mule, the 'man with the gun' still

in front. Mr Sterne lounged on in a truly Shandean fashion. He must have allowed his party to get a post or so in front — a delay to be easily fetched up. He loitered behind, and picked up genuine bits of charming life. He saw the dresses, and decorations, and scenery. He spoke to every one — to the drum-maker, who was making drums for his Beaucaire Fair; to the two Franciscan friars, who were trudging it along, and with whom he turned back for a short way: to the 'gossip,' from whom he bought the Provence figs for four sous, but in the interpretation of which contract a legal difficulty arose in reference to a conveyance of the basket also — in short, 'joining all parties before me — waiting for every soul behind — hailing all those who were coming through cross roads — arresting all kinds of beggars, pilgrims, fiddlers' — he was always in company; his mule loving society as much as he did, and having always, 'some proposals on his part to offer to every beast he met.' He seems to have found it a delightful pilgrimage. Until he finally glides into that exquisite idyll which begins like a song: — 'Twas on the road betwixt Nismes and Lunel, where there is the best Muscatto wine

in all France.' The charming village dance, with Nannette, and the pipe of the lame youth, ringing musically in our ears, brings us in softly to the old red-brick town of Toulouse, and to the end of his journey.

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

CHAPTER III

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

AT Paris he had made a friend of a half French, half Irish Priest, the Abbé Mackarty, who took immense pains in furnishing him with hints for his journey—kindness which Mr Sterne thoughtfully acknowledged by commissioning Mrs Sterne to bring over a watch-chain for him ('twill be a present worth a kingdom to him,' said he). The Abbé did not allow his kindness to stop there, but knowing something of Toulouse, found out a residence for them, and planned all their expenses. Mr Sterne seems to have been very grateful, and wrote to his friends of these little kindnesses.

They were lodged delightfully, just outside the town, in a stately house, elegant, charmingly furnished, built in the form of a hotel, with a court in front, and opening behind on pretty gardens laid out in serpentine walks,

and considered the finest in the place. These grounds were so large and so much admired, that all the ladies and gentlemen of that quarter used to come and promenade there on the autumn evenings, and were made welcome. Inside, there were a fine dining-room and a spacious reception-room — 'quite as good as Baron d'Holbach's at Paris;' three handsome bedrooms with dressing-rooms, and two good rooms below, dedicated to Yorick — where he wrote his adventures. There were cellars in abundance. Mr Sterne was in raptures with it all — revelled in his *seigneurie* of such a mansion — thought it only 'too good by half for us;' but felt comfort in the wonderfully moderate rent — only thirty pounds a year! For this modest rent, too, his landlord, M. Sligniac, was to 'keep up' the gardens. Nay, there was a pretty country house not far off — an old chateau, with a pavilion attached to it — where Mr Sterne used also to write his *Shandys*, and which he christened 'Don Pringello's,' in compliment to one of the Crazy Castle set — and which M. Sligniac allowed him to use, all included in the same modest amount! Something of this is to be accounted for the cheapness of

the times. Even forty years ago, such charming retreats on the edge of a French provincial town were to be secured by the economic stranger. But something, too, I suspect, must be placed to the account of the tenant's pleasant ways.

The whole establishment was organised in a few days. Mr Sterne loved to revel in his new housekeeping. They had an excellent cook, a *femme-de-chambre*, and 'a good-looking *laquais*.' He found out that they could live 'for very very little.' Wood was the only thing dear; and by-and-by they found that keeping a capital table, two hundred and fifty pounds would be their whole yearly expenditure. He at once put himself on a course of ass's milk three times a day, and began to get strong again.

For the first fortnight or so, he missed his Paris friends, and wrote home a little dismally. Some letters, too, from his Epicurean friend Hall, set him longing to be back again: and made him maunder out regrets and fears, in a lament of worse than his average French. '*Ce sera là*' (at Crazy Castle) '*où reposera ma cendre — et se sera là où mon cousin viendra repondre les pleurs dues a notre amitie.*' But

he soon began to recover his spirits — talked boastfully 'of giving the blue devils a drubbing' — and, as usual, began to make plenty of friends. He was dining with Mr Hewit a few days after he arrived, and before long knew everybody. It was gay enough. For the Countess Fumel and M. Bonrepos 'received' nearly every night of the week. The old President D'Orbesson kept a hospitable table — 'donne toujours à manger,' wrote the little scandal-mongers of the place, 'et vit toujours avec Mdme. La Garse.'

About the end of September 'an epidemic vile fever' visited Toulouse, and swept away hundreds. Mr Sterne, just then getting restored, was seized, and was very nearly 'journeying on to the other world.' It clung to him for six weeks, during which time he was in the hands of the Toulouse faculty, 'the errantest of all the charlatans in Europe, or the most ignorant of all pretending fools.' They had all but sent him travelling down the valley of the great Shadow, when it occurred to him to dispense altogether with their aid, and leave his cure to 'Dame Nature,' who, 'dear goddess, has saved me fifty different pinching bouts.' This impunity, he told the

lord of Crazy Castle, was at last beginning to make him think that he was to 'leave you all by translation, and not by fair death.' Nothing indeed could damp that wonderful spirit which made up for a miserable constitution, and which made him joyously chant *poculum elevatum* when barely convalescent; '*et cela etant*,' he sings from his pavilion, to Hall Stevenson, in his incorrigible French, 'having a bottle of Frontiniac and glass at my right hand, I drink, dear Antony, to thy health and happiness.'

By the middle of October he was 'stout and foolish again, as a happy man can wish to be,' and had actually finished his next *Shandy* volume. He had dashed in his travels, as it were, at a white heat, and was painting in Uncle Toby's loves with great delight. He was meditating, too, schemes of 'other works;'—no doubt a dusky hint of the *Sentimental Journey*. There is room indeed to suspect that the seventh volume of *Tristram Shandy* was this 'other work;'—the first portion of a *Sentimental Journey* commenced, and abandoned for the present. It is likely that he began at once with my Uncle Toby's amours, and, being later pressed for copy, had

thrown in his unfinished travels as a make-weight. It will be seen at a glance that these travels belong properly to the *Sentimental Journey*, and beyond that violent and improbable introduction of Uncle Toby and Trim into the cathedral at Auxerre—clearly done as a link—have nothing to do with the adventures of *Tristram*.

For the moment, he had got tired of the provincial town. The place was not to his taste, though about as good as any town in the south of France; but he lays his disgust principally to the account of the 'eternal platitude of the French character.' He, too, was sick of the local parliament and its wrangles. 'If I do not mind,' he said, 'I shall grow most stupid and sententious' by mere contagion. His daughter, however, relished her new life much, and with masters in music, dancing and French, was rapidly adapting herself to the new country.

Already he was looking forward to leaving as soon as the winter was over. He had said that they should all set out for Baréges or Bagnières, and after taking the waters, of which there can be no question he had serious need, he proposed returning home. Mrs

Sterne, however, wished to stay another year, 'to save money;' and this 'opposition of wishes,' said Mr Sterne, 'though it will not be as sour as lemon, yet 'twill not be as sweet as sugar candy.' Still he took this opposition good-humouredly. 'My dear wife,' he said, 'is against all schemes of additional expense, which wicked propensity (though not of despotic power) yet I cannot suffer. But she may talk, I will do my own way, and she will acquiesce without a word of debate upon the subject. Who can say so much in praise of his wife? few, I trow.' At the moment this debate was going on there was 'bitter cold weather,' going on for fourteen days together, which has obliged us to 'sit with whole fagots of wood lighted up to our noses.' Snow was on the ground, and by the time the winter was over, he was complaining of agues and the moisture. It does therefore seem a little unreasonable in Mrs Sterne to seek to detain her delicate husband another winter at such a place, even if he deserved pains and penalties for his own act in bringing them there. And it must be borne in mind that the Pyrenees, where was the spot he wished to go to, was actually in sight.

He had an invaluable banker up at Paris, Mr Foley, of the firm of Panchaud & Foley, who was to him more as a warm friend than a mere banker. This was but the natural operation of Mr Sterne's delightful art of attaching strangers. M. Brousse was the correspondent at Toulouse, and by-and-by, in spite of that marvellous cheapness, Mr Foley had to remit very frequently through M. Brousse. The banker was the intimate of Baron d'Holbach, their common friend. Down at Toulouse also was a Mrs M—— (who may have been that Mrs Meadows who turns up later in England), whom Mr Foley also knew, with whom Mr Sterne used to dine. The Hewits were still there; M. Tollot, his Paris friend, was not; but Sterne heartily wished he could lead Sir Charles down. Mr Woodhouse, 'an amiable, worthy man,' was also there, on his road to Italy. They had altogether a very pleasant, lively, noisy little *coterie* — a sort of 'happy society, living together like brothers and sisters.' They met every night together, 'fiddling, laughing, and singing, and cracking jokes.'

Towards Christmas, his friends the Hewits came on a visit to him, and the lively host

was presently organising a pleasant entertainment suited to the season. 'You will scarce believe the news I tell you,' he wrote gravely to his friend Foley; 'there are a company of English strollers arrived here, who are to act comedies all the Christmas, and are now busy in making dresses and preparing some of our best comedies.' He was, in fact, getting up amateur theatricals with Mrs M——, his daughter, and others of his society, 'to whom,' he adds in his mysterious French, 'I proposed this scheme *soulagement*.' They 'did very well.' They had 'a grand orchestra,' and for the first performance Mr Sterne selected 'The Busy Body,' and 'The Journey to London.' Should we not like to see the play-bill of those Toulouse theatricals? He spoke of adapting 'The Journey to London' to their own adventures, and calling it 'The Journey to Toulouse.' We can scarcely speculate as to the part he would have chosen for himself in this last play, but in 'The Busy Body,' Marplot would have fitted him exactly, and he would have played it delightfully.

The winter passed by, and it came to the end of March when he went on a visit to his friend Hewit, who lived in the country not

very far away. From that house he wrote to that 'honest soul,' Mr. Foley, dating his letter from Toulouse. 'Though that's a mistake,' he begins oddly, 'I mean the date of the place.' His letters to this gentleman were now pretty regularly pitched in the one key. He was wanting remittances through 'Messrs Brousse & Sons.' He had not 'five louis to vapour with in this land of coxcombs. My wife's compliments.' He is visiting 'Messrs Brousse & Sons' every post day this last fortnight. 'When a man has no more than a half-dozen guineas in his pocket, and a thousand miles from home, and in a country where he can as soon raise the Devil as a six livres piece to go to market with, you cannot envy my situation. God bless you; remit me the balance.' 'Poverty of spirit,' he wrote again, 'is worse than poverty of purse by ten thousand per cent.,' and incloses a draft for a hundred and thirty pounds, which he requires to be cashed by return of post, or he will send 'you and all your commissions to the D——l. I don't hear that they have tasted one fleshy banquet all this Lent. You will make an excellent *grille*. As for Panchaud, they can make nothing of him but *Bouillon*.'

By April he had already settled on leaving for Bagnières. About the beginning of June he was to 'decamp like a patriarch' with his whole family, and stay three months. For such an expedition money was wanting, and the raising of these supplies brought about a little misunderstanding between him and his banker which is very characteristic. It was all founded on a mistake, but shows how much he had attached this 'honest soul' to him. 'After all,' he says at the close, 'I heartily forgive you, for you have done me a signal service in mortifying me, and I am determined to grow rich upon it. Adieu, and God send you wealth and happiness.'

It turned out to be a misunderstanding. The banker was overwhelmed with business, and had forgotten the application. He wrote back, hurt at the tone of his friend's letter, enclosing the money, and bidding him never scruple to draw on him for any occasion of the kind. Mr Sterne acknowledged his kindness in a grateful and graceful letter, saying 'I was the best friends with you in the world before my letter had got a league.' Even in that remote part of the world he had made out friends who could be useful

to him in such an emergency; and a 'Mr R.,' of Montpellier, whom he had never even seen, had sent him a letter of credit for two hundred pounds, which he had then in his desk. This good-natured 'Mr R.' Smollett helps us to identify as a Mr Ray, the banker, of Montpellier.

Again Mr Sterne had to write to his Archbishop, setting out a catalogue of his sufferings with a pleasant *bonhomie*, and pleading for an extension of leave, in a style of his own that almost amounts to a fascination. It has been before remarked what an engaging tone he could assume to those who were above him; and these letters are significant proofs of his cordial relation, in spite of secret enemies and open calumny, with his episcopal superior.

TOULOUSE, *May* 7, 1768.

MY LORD, — Though there is little in this part of the world worth giving you an account of, and of myself, perhaps, the least of anything in it, yet bad as the subject is, it is my duty to say something about it, and your Grace, for that reason, I am sure, will bear with the trouble.

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

It was this time twelve months that I thought myself so far recovered, that I was preparing to return home, when the attention to my daughter's health, who had had an increase of an asthma under which she had lingered some time, determined my route otherwise; as an original weakness of lungs was her case as well as my own, I thought it just to give the daughter the same chance for her life which had saved her father's. Of this I wrote y^{r} Grace a letter, but had scarce sent it to the post, when (from what cause I know not, except the extreme weakness of the organ) I broke a vessel in my lungs, w^{ch} could not be closed till I had almost bled to death; so that to the motives of going with my daughter into the south of France, I had that superadded—my own immediate preservation; accordingly I have been fixed here with my family these ten months, and by God's blessing it has answered all I wished for, with regard to my daughter; I cannot say so much for myself, having since the first day of my arrival here been in a continual warfare with agues, fevers, and physicians—the 1st brought my blood to so poor a state, that the physicians

found it necessary to enrich it with strong bouillons, and strong bouillons and soups a santé threw me into fevers, and fevers brought on loss of blood, and loss of blood agues — so that as *war begets poverty, poverty peace*, etc. etc. — has this miserable constitution made all its revolutions; how many more it may sustain, before its last and great one, God knows — like the rest of my species, I shall fence it off as long as I can. I am advised now to try the virtues of the waters of Banyars, and shall encamp like a patriarch w^h^ my whole household upon the side of the Pyreneans, this summer and winter at Nice; from whence in spring I shall return home, never, I fear, to be of service, at least as a preacher. I have preached too much, my Lord, already; and was my age to be computed either by the number of sermons I have preached, or the infirmities they have brought upon me, I might be truly said to have the claim of a *Miles emeritus*, and was there a Hotel des Invalides for the reception of such established upon any salutary plain betwixt here and Arabia Felix, I w^d^ beg your Grace's interest to help me into it — as it is, I rest fully assured in my

heart of y^r^ Grace's indulgence to me in my endeavours to add a few quiet years to this fragment of my life — and with my wishes for a long and a happy one to y^r^ Grace, I am, from the truest veneration of y^r^ character, — Your most dutiful servant,

L. STERNE.

By the middle of June they were all at Bagnières. We have not a single line* to record their doings at that watering-place. He expected 'much health and much amusement from the concourse of adventurers from all corners of the earth.' But it did not come up to his expectations, for the following year he spoke contemptuously of its pleasures as compared with those of Scarborough. He had laid out a little expedition from thence over the Pyrenees, and possibly a week in Spain, with a view to materials for his Shandean travels. We know not whether he ever carried out this scheme. We can only regret the loss, for he has been so successful with his French brush: how he would have revelled in the

* [There is one letter from Bagnières. It is printed for the first time in this edition of Sterne. See Letter LXXXVIII.]

Spanish tints! We have lost chapters that would have been as bright and true in tone as Gil Blas.

Later, they went down to Marseilles, and also paid a visit to Aix, neither of which places they liked much. Aix was a 'Parliament town,' and Toulouse had given him a surfeit of such. And to all these places he took with him Mrs Sterne and his Lydia. It was now October, and getting on fast to another winter. His chest admonished him it was time to look out for a sheltered retreat; and there can be no question but that he was yearning for England, and would have gladly gone home in the summer. It is not too much to assume that he had to yield to domestic considerations, either of economy or affection; and that Mrs Sterne, by those silent tactics which he described so pleasantly, had her way. They were determined not to return to Toulouse, and by the 5th of October they were all established at the famous sanatory city of Montpellier.

Montpellier was at this season in high repute for delicate persons, and invalids of all countries fled thither from their own hard winters. It was considered a handsome town,

'a magazine of houses;' which were more showy inside than out. Socially it was very gay, it having Courts of Justice, '*cours souverains*,' an Intendency, and, above all, the Assembly of the Estates of Languedoc, who met there with all due state. It was, besides, the seat of a military government, and was full of '*gens de condition*.' It was, moreover, famous in France for the special attraction of its women. There reigned here the most delightful absence of all restraint. The natives were noted for their pleasant, easy manners; their good humour and wit; and the easy welcome they gave to strangers. It was remarked that even those who were ugly had a certain attraction which it was hard to resist.* A dangerous locality, certainly, for Mr Sterne's inflammable heart. Strangers were very welcome, and English abounded. There were many parties, and much fashionable high play always going forward.

Strange to say, Mr Sterne did not seem to like it. He was pining for home; and actually in the first week after his arrival was laying out departing in February for England,

* See Madame Du Noyer's lively *Lettres Galantes*, tom. i. p. 114.

'where my heart has been fled these six months'—then stay a fortnight in Paris—pass on to Brussels — Rotterdam, 'for the sake of seeing Holland' (*materiel* for a book of travels)! and 'embark from thence to London.' This was five or six months before he could hope to depart, and with exactly such castle-building had he entertained himself during his first visit at Toulouse. At this time, too, he was tempted by an offer of going to Italy, in the quality of what he has called 'Bear Leader,' but he did not like either the terms that were proposed, or the bear he was to lead.

His Toulouse friend, Mr Hewit, was also at Montpellier. But a very agreeable variety was produced by the arrival of some Paris friends, and that M. Tollot, who he had hoped 'would bring Sir Charles' to Toulouse. This gentleman, who seems to have always had a genuine kindness for him, was delighted to meet again '*le bon et agréable* Tristram,' as he called him, and stayed nearly a fortnight. They talked together over future plans, and M. Tollot drew a pleasant picture of future amusements together — how they were to find Mr Sterne a room at their hotel in Paris—

how there was to be a cover regularly laid for him each day — how they were to be joined by Hall Stevenson, and travel home to England together. Mr Sterne entered into the scheme warmly, and, as will be seen, when passing through Paris, went and stayed with them as proposed.

Monsieur Tollot also talked a good deal with the Hewits, and they told him some particulars about Mr Sterne's Toulouse life. '*Le bon et agréable* Tristram,' with all his lively gifts, was naturally made welcome everywhere; but poor Mrs Sterne, perhaps not so *recherché*, would pursue him everywhere. She clung to him tenaciously — '*Elle voulait être de tout*,' says the Frenchman who tells the story. Nothing affords such wicked delight to French society as a nuptial exhibition of this sort — it gives occasion to all manner of smart sayings. But Mr Sterne accepted his wife's pursuit, which is reported to have made him pass '*d'assez mauvais momens*,' with 'the patience of an angel.'* This letter is not of much moment, nor indeed of much dignity in a historical sense; yet still it has some little value, for without disparaging Mrs Sterne,

* Mr Cooper's *Seven Letters of Sterne*.

who, after all, meant well, it shows him as a good-humoured as well as a sensible husband.

That winter nearly passed by. He got over the Christmas in tolerable health, and on the fifth of January was writing a kind, warm letter to his friend Mr Foley, chiding him for not writing 'even a single line, be it only to tell me how your watch goes,' which he left unfinished on his desk and then went out for a ride towards Pezenas. Yorick was always destined to be unlucky in his horses. Coming home, his beast broke down and refused to stir. 'He was as immovable as Don Quixote's wooden horse, and my arm was dislocated whipping him. "This," quoth I, "is inhuman." "No," says a peasant on foot behind me, "I'll drive him home." So he laid on his posteriors, but 'twas needless; as his face was turned towards Montpellier he began to trot.' The result was that Mr Sterne returned home in an aguish fever, which kept him ten days in his bed, and the unfinished letter was not despatched until the fifteenth. . . . He was low-spirited after this, and seems to have suffered terribly in what he forcibly calls 'this scuffle with death.' He adds that 'unless the spirit of prophecy deceive me, I shall

not die, but live,' and then breaks into a very remarkable declaration, — 'In the meantime, dear Foley, let us live as merrily but as innocently as we can. *It has ever been as good, if not better, than a Bishopric to me — and I desire no other.*'

About this time he wrote to his publisher Becket, being anxious about the moneys that were due to him.

'I wrote my last letter to you from hence with so much haste, that I forgot the principal thing I had in my Intention, and which I had in a former letter desired you to be so good as to inform me about — I mean what is the real state of our accounts; or in other words, how many sets of *Shandy* you have got off to Booksellers and others since the 7th of last April. I am much obliged to you for your leave to let me draw upon you for the Summ you mentioned — but should be infinitely more easy to know how much you have in your hands of mine. Wherefore dear sir favour me with an exact state of this — for tho' tis more a matter of Curiosity than any Thing else — Yet I would rather have it satisfyed now than 3 months hence when I

shall see you and have all things in course settled. . . .' etc.*

By-and-by more English arrived. Lord Rochford, passing through on his way to Italy, made him a call, and told him how Mr Fox — 'my worthy friend,' Mr Sterne calls him — was then in Paris, and how the gay metropolis was almost full of English. His health was mending slowly, and his physicians, after treating him ineffectually, suddenly informed him, almost to his amusement, 'If you stay any longer here, sir, it will be fatal to you.' 'And why, good people,' answered the patient, naturally enough, 'were you not kind enough to tell me this sooner?'

This treatment was indeed barbarous, and reads like a bit of Molière. Anything more ludicrously inefficient for a consumptive patient cannot be conceived. They almost poisoned him with a succession of what they called *bouillons refraichissants*, the elements of which were 'a cock *flayed* alive, and boiled with poppy seeds, these pounded in a mortar, afterwards passed through a sieve.' There was besides to

* It is evidence of the rarity of Sterne autographs, that this letter was priced in the catalogue at £23.

be present one crawfish, which should be a male one. This was *de rigueur*, a female crawfish being likely to be fatal! This precious composition must have been devised specially for the English, and for that malady of '*consomption*' which we are told was peculiar to them. There can be no question but that the physician who prescribed this primitive nostrum for Mr Sterne, was the same M. F—— whom Smollett consulted when he visited Montpellier the following year. It is the most amusing passage in his travels. He was indeed an arrant charlatan, and Mrs Sterne, comparing notes with the Scotch physician at Toulouse, told him of an unhappy English youth named Oswald, son to a merchant, who had fallen a victim to their caprices. The young man, in the last stage of consumption, took his *bouillons refraichissants* for above a month with the worst results; and on his complaining was told precisely as Mr Sterne had been told, — 'Sir, the air of this place is too sharp for your lungs.' 'Then,' said the other, 'you are a sordid villain to have kept me here.' He went to Toulouse, where he died in a few weeks.

Mr Sterne, when he had received this cheer-

ing notice from his physicians, told Mrs Sterne that he must return home at once; and it is plain that here was a text for another unpleasant matrimonial discussion as to the point of residence; which ended in each party resolving to go their own road. Mrs Sterne was determined to stay two or three years more in France, in which 'I am truly passive,' says he —with the exception that he would rather have his daughter with him in England.

He looked forward with delight to the idea of getting home, for he was heartily tired of provincial France. The States of Languedoc were already met at Montpellier, 'a fine raree show, with the usual accompaniments of fiddlers, bears, and puppet-shows;' of which spectacle, too, Miss Knight has left us an admirable photograph; but it had no attraction for him. He will fly from them with alacrity; and, except for grief of losing her whom he calls 'my little slut,' he will step into his chaise in high spirits. 'Every step towards England he fancied will help to put his poor frame to rights.' It needed repair sadly. But Mrs Sterne had her way. The plea was the health of her daughter. He was most earnest in his wish to have them with him; as, indeed, it

seems to have been his wish to the last. She selected Montauban for her place of abode, a little town close to Toulouse, which also boasted its 'little senate' and provincial '*haute volée*' of the Sword and Gown.

PARIS

CHAPTER IV

PARIS

MR STERNE was now back again in Paris. He stayed, as was arranged, at M. Tollot's hotel in the Quartier St Honoré, where he found 'good and generous souls.' From Paris he wrote to his 'dear Lydia' one of those warm, affectionate letters which are delightful to read. He sends her down a little present of books — *Spectators* and *Metastasio;* 'but I beg my girl,' writes the father, 'to read the former, and only make the latter her amusement.' He also sent her a guitar, and tells her good-humouredly not to go on with the drawing, as 'you have no genius for it, though you never could be made to believe it.' He reminds her of his 'last request,' which was to make no friendship with the 'French women;' not that he thought so badly of them *all,* but he was afraid of her acquiring the false French man-

ners then in vogue. 'Nay, I am so jealous of you,' goes on the fond and careful father, 'that I should be miserable were I to see you had the least grain of coquetry in your composition.' The fact was, he already *did* see some few grains, and was fearful lest it should get further developed.

As usual, he found Paris delightful. There were plenty of English, and many Irish and Scotch. Wilkes, staying at the Hôtel de Saxe, Rue Colombier, was laughing loudly with D'Holbach, but at the same time was nervously expecting that sentence of expulsion from the House of Commons which came later. The real Lion of the Hour — just as Garrick had been that of the past year, and Sterne again that of the year before — was David Hume, the new ambassador's secretary — to the amazement of his friends at home, who only knew him as a correct writer and acute thinker. He was heard of in the gayest, the most exclusive *salons*, with the fairest ladies of the capital, sitting, as it were, at his feet, and listening to Deism, explained in rude limping French.

With him, as well as with Wilkes, Sterne now became acquainted. Of Hume, he heard

that story which so well illustrates the niceties of the French tongue, and which he afterwards fitted into his *Sentimental Travels.* More likely he himself, 'at our ambassador's table,' had heard 'the prompt French Marquis' ask the secretary if he was Home the poet? 'No,' answered the other mildly. '*Tant pis!*' said the 'prompt French Marquis,' perhaps too promptly. 'It is Hume the historian,' some one then whispered. '*Tant mieux!*' said the Marquis, adroitly, repairing his mistake. 'And Mr Hume, who is a man of an excellent heart, returned thanks for both.' Only a Frenchman could have extricated himself so skilfully. It occurred to him again later, when on his Sentimental Travels.

This was the Lord Hertford, who had just returned Wilkes's visit, though the latter was fashionably considered an enemy of king, country, and all good men. He had also just given that wonderful form of attestation as to Wilkes's illness: 'In witness whereof, I have *affixed my hand* and seal,' which was amusing all the English in Paris. There were many Jacobites, too, associating with the English travelling Whigs in the greatest harmony,

and, among others, the uncle of the Lord of Crazy Castle, and the real *de jure* Lord of Crazy Castle. This was a Mr Laurence Trotter, who had left Skelton Castle in the '45 troubles, and had been compelled, like many other adherents of the fallen cause, to flutter about foreign courts and capitals. He was, however, 'eternally joyous and *jockundissimus*;' and Mr Sterne met him at houses of every shade of politics. He dined with him at Lord Tavistock's; and on another occasion, found him at the table of Lord Beauchamp the ambassador's son. Such happy toleration at a season when the bitterness of home politics was extreme, seems extraordinary.

One Sunday Mr Sterne was invited to preach before the ambassador. On a Sunday in January the little chapel in the Faubourg St Honoré, 'près barrière du Louvre,' had echoed the dull utterances of a Doctor Trail, who wearied Wilkes sadly. But now it was filled to overflowing with the most motley crowd. It may be questioned if it ever held such a congregation; there were all nations, believers and unbelievers, Humes, Diderots, D'Holbachs, all gathered to hear famous Par-

son Yorick. The sermon was worthy of the occasion, and was perhaps the strangest of all his strange sermons. He selected Hezekiah ('an odd subject you and mother will say,' he wrote to Lydia) — and giving out the following text — '*And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among all my treasures that I have not showed them*' — startled the audience with — 'And where was the harm, you'll say, in all this?'

He then proceeded to explain the whole story, in a pleasant discourse, admirable in style, and very practical in tone. Nothing can be more admirable than his remarks on the motive of human actions.

'There is scarce anything which the human heart bears worse than an analysis of this kind.

'We are a strange compound; and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns where interest lists under it all the powers of disguise, but even in the most indifferent of our actions *not worth a fallacy*, by force

of habit we continue it. So that whatever a man is about, observe him — he stands armed inside and out with two motives, an ostensible one for the world, and another which he reserves for his own private use; this, you will say, the world has no concern with — it might have been so; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a character, instead of winning one, we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.' He then, with a delicate and dramatic touch, deals with the motives which govern the ordinary hypocrisies of life. La Rochefoucault had preached on the same text before. 'Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion for which is good and worthy will not carry us high enough? GOD! *thou knowest they carry us too high — we want not to be, but to seem. Look out of your door*, take notice of that man: see what disquieting, intriguing, and shifting he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain dealing! three grains of honesty would save him all this trouble.

'Another, going on almost in the same track. With what an inflexible sanctity of de-

portment he sustains himself as he advances; *every line in his face writes abstain, every stride looks like a check upon his desires;* see, I beseech you, how he is cloak'd up with sermons and prayers, etc. Is there no serving God without all this? Must the garb *of religion be extended so wide to the danger of its rending?* Yes, truly, it will not hide the secret; and what is that? That the saint has no religion at all.'

The broken, scattered manner in which it is printed, gives us a hint of the dramatic fashion in which it was delivered. The questions, pauses, and the very look of the preacher must have made it a very original performance; not one of his little portraits, too, but would have formed a counterpart in the great vortex of Parisian society; and touched a chord among his motley audience.

It was altogether a curious homily, and must have entertained the ambassador and his congregation marvellously. Remarkable, too, in another sense. For he had determined it was to be the last occasion of his ascending the pulpit. Either the exertion, or the agitation, or both together, brought on the old attack — a vessel in his lungs gave way once

more, and he nearly 'bled to death.' This was sufficient. Yet he was to preach once more before he died — not before an ambassador, but before a king.

Again, too, had the sentimental heart of Yorick become enchained; and a new charmer, of whose name we are in ignorance, restored him once more to that blissful state which, he was persuaded, always secured him against any mean or pitiful action.* He tells the whole history with an unrestrained confidence, which shows he considered that Mr Yorick's *amourettes* were fairly the property of the public, and nothing to be ashamed of. 'All which being premised,' he wrote to his friend Hall, 'I have been for eight weeks smitten with the tenderest pains that ever human wight underwent. I wish, dear cousin, thou could'st conceive (perhaps thou can'st, without my wishing it), how deliciously I cantered away with it the first month — two up, two down — always upon my haunches along the street, from my hotel to hers — at first once, then twice, then three times a day — *until at length I was within an ace of setting up my*

* Could this be the first appearance of 'Eliza'? She must have come from India to England about this time. [At this time "Eliza" was in India. She came to England in 1765.]

hobby-horse in her stable for good and all. I might as well, considering how the enemies of the Lord have blasphemed thereupon. The last three weeks we were every hour upon the doleful ditty of parting — and, my dear cousin, how it altered my gait and air — for I came and went like any condemn'd carl, and did nothing but mix tears and *jouer des sentiments* with her from sun rising to the setting of the same; and now she is gone to the south of France.' This affair could not have been very serious, as he was already talking with complacency of his departure for London: — They had lived, he owns, 'shag-rag and bobtail, all of us, a most jolly, nonsensical life of it.'

He started on Thursday, about the middle of May,* and was in London about the twenty-ninth, and put up in John Street, with his friends the Thornhills. He was also a good deal in and about the environs. His friend Foley came to London when he was there, but by some fatality they never met, and were 'like the two buckets in a well;' and by the first week in August he was back again in York, after an absence of about two years and four months.

* [May 24.]

AT HOME AGAIN

CHAPTER V

AT HOME AGAIN

HIS Archbishop, as we have seen, was indulgent, and seems to have given him unlimited indulgence as to leave of absence. Mr Sterne was now a little scared about his health, and actually, before he had been home a month, proclaimed to his Paris friends that he was seized with a cough; which if it held him three days, they would certainly see him in Paris the week following — for 'now,' he added, 'I abandon everything in this world to health and to my friends. So I am altogether an idle man, or rather a free one, which is better.'

Idle as he was, he had taken the trouble of sending money 'last post' to his wife,* and of

* From February to November Mrs Sterne's 'account' seems to have stood thus: —

Feby. in hand,	.	.	.	.	£100	0	0
Aug. 6, "	.	.	.	.	20	0	0
Sept. 29, "	.	.	.	.	50	0	0
Nov. 16, "	.	.	.	.	30	0	0

But it is plain from the letters that more was sent than this amount.

remitting more to Mr Foley. And in that letter he begins a series of remittances and a series of thoughtful directions for insuring that Mrs Sterne should be always well supplied with money. Nothing can be more persevering, more ceaseless, than his injunctions on this head, at home or abroad. In the hurry of his travels he never forgets them. 'Betwixt this and Ladyday next, Mrs S. will draw from time to time upon you for about the amount of a hundred louis. . . . But you shall always have money of mine upon hand . . . and she proposes to spend no more than 5000 livres in the year; — but twenty pound this way or that makes no difference between us.' From this time forth, all his letters were full of the same injunction — which are not insisted on here, as proofs of any unusual affection — but of a careful thoughtfulness quite opposed to the neglectful character that has been made for him.

It will be seen later how marvellous it was, that the distorted tale of the careless, neglectful husband should have ever got abroad. There are a hundred little scraps of evidence, sufficient not merely to refute such a story, but to establish for him — absent as well as

present — the character of a kind, careful, *thoughtful* husband. Even for the sake of his daughter he would not have neglected her, and tried by that vile, but substantial, test of affection — money, which he was always sadly in need of himself — he comes out triumphantly.

By the first week in September he was still busy with the chronicles of 'my Uncle Toby's amours.' He was getting on but slowly, for the weather was beautiful — and 'there is no sitting and cudgelling one's brains while the sun shines bright.' The dull season of October, which Edgar Poe sang of, was at hand, 'and 'twill be all over in six or seven weeks, and there are dismal months enow after, to endure suffocation by a brimstone fireside.' He was lonely enough at his Coxwould hearth; and he was thinking of leaving 'a few poor sheep in the wilderness for fourteen days,' and hurrying off to Scarborough, even then a gay watering-place. He wrote to his friend Stevenson to join him there; 'for a man who makes six tons of alum a week may do anything.'

It will be recollected how, a couple of years before, he had written from Paris to the Arch-

bishop in favour of his Coxwould curate, Mr Kilner. In that letter he was guarded in his testimony, owing to the short time during which he himself had personal knowledge of the curate's behaviour. Later he seems, with true Shandean carelessness, to have signed some more general testimonial; which covered a period beyond Mr Sterne's own knowledge. And this appears to have displeased his superior; who yet might have recollected the careful way in which Mr Sterne had before guarded himself on this very point.

'COXWOULD, *Oct.* 30, 1764.*

'MY LORD, — I know not whether I did do right or wrong in signing the testimonial of Mr Kilner, my curate's, behaviour for three years, during the greatest part of which time I was in another country and could know nothing at all of the matter; but I believed your Grace's good temper would give the only good interpretation it could admit of, and that all I meant was to certify for his morals and good behaviour for the little time I knew him before I went abroad, and for the few months I

* In 1891 there was sold at Sotheby's, an agreement with a curate of his, Mr John Walker, who was to 'serve' Stillington at £40 a year.

have been with him since my return. I had this, moreover, to have added that he came well recommended; that his character in this parish is very good, and that the man is well liked as a quiet and an honest man, and withal as a good reader and preacher — I think him so myself — and had it not been impertinent to speak to a point, of which your Grace is this moment going to be a judge, I believe him a good scholar also — I do not say a graceful one — for his bodily presence is mean; and were he to stand for Ordination before a Popish Bishop, the poor fellow would be disabled by a Canon in a moment.

'I beg a thousand pardons of y^r^ Grace for taking the liberty of saying a word more upon this than I had strictly occasion for, the whole purport of my letter being simply this — "to assure your Grace I had no intent of deceiving you;" I am sure I could have no interest, for by long and obstinate coughs, and unaccountable hemorrhages in my lungs, and a thorough relaxation of the organ (or something worse) in consequence of them. I am foretold by the best physicians, both in France and here, that 'twill be fatal to me to preach; indeed, nature tells me I have no powers, and the last

poor experiment I made in preaching at the Ambassador's chapel at Paris (tho' no larger than y^r^ Grace's dining-room), had liked to have fulfill'd their predictions — for w^ch^ reason, as I cannot discharge my duty myself, 'tis the more incumbent on me to have it unexceptionably done by others.

'I beg pardon, my Lord, once more, for giving you this trouble;

'And wish your Grace very truly and cordially many many years of good health, without all this anxiety to preserve it.

'I am, with duty and esteem,

'Y^r^ Grace's most faithful servant,

'LAU. STERNE.'

At Scarborough he found Lord Granby, Lord Shelburne, and many more. The races were going on, and he remained to drink the waters for about three weeks. This would have really been of service to his health, did not his 'playing the good fellow' with his noble friends impair it as fast as he improved it. Mr Stevenson had gone to Harrogate with Sir Charles Danvers, and others 'of the jolly set,' whom Mr Sterne for a moment thought of joining after his Scarborough cam-

paign. But instead, he returned to his 'Philosophical Hut,' and sat down steadily to work at *Tristram*, and have it ready for the winter.

He had just heard from Mrs Sterne, with an application for money. He wrote to his banker at once — 'as her purse *is low, for God's sake write directly.*' She was now at Montauban, and wrote also in much distress about a hint which the Montauban banker had dropped in reference to her 'being separated for life' from Mr Sterne. He, too, was annoyed at such a rumour, for all their sakes (the tattle of an obscure French provincial town could not affect him), and he wrote kindly and earnestly to Mr Foley: 'Now this is not true in the first place, and *may give a disadvantageous impression* of her.'

By November he had his regular *Tristram* instalment ready for the press. He had also conceived the idea of writing sermons for publication, since he could no longer preach what he published; — a step to which the success of Mr Yorick's dramatic discourses might well tempt him: for by the year of his death they had 'cantered,' as he himself would say, through no less than nine editions. He wrote to his Paris friends in high satisfaction with

his work. 'You will read as comical a tour through France,' he said to Foley, 'as ever was projected or executed by traveller or travel-writers since the world began. Panchaud will enjoy it. I am quite civil to your Parisians, *et pour cause*, you know. I may see them in the spring.' In the same letter he thinks of Mrs Sterne: 'If she should have occasion before Christmas for fifty Louis, let her not wait a minute.' In a few days after, fearful of some mistake or delay through his banker having no funds to his credit, he forwards from York one hundred pounds. At this time, too, he was very busy, it being 'Church militant week,' and the old business of enclosing Stillington common having cropped up again, he was much worried by all 'the marches and countermarches' ecclesiastical, attendant on this proceeding; but, as usual, found a solace in two young ladies who were staying at the same country house in the neighbourhood — a couple of romping girls (*bien mises et comme il faut*), who would come rushing in upon him, and gave his 'judgment many more airings than they wanted.' Altogether, he was beginning to be reconciled to his lonely 'Philosophical Hut;' but it was

more from an anticipation of a London Christmas, and the old notion of a tour in Italy, which he was beginning to turn over in his mind. Soothed by this complacent prospect, he could afford to philosophise over his 'sweet retirement; wherever we go we must bring three parts in four of this treat along with us; in short, we must be happy within, and few things without us make much difference.' We need only read M. Tollot's description of this 'happy mortal' to see that there was no dreamy speculation, and that no one, in truth, ever so handsomely 'brought three parts in four of the treat' with him in return for his entertainment.

As it came close on Christmas he was away to London with his wares. They did not appear until the 26th of January, 1765, when the usual stereotyped advertisements appeared in the *St James's Chronicle*, the *Public Ledger*, and other journals: 'This day were published, price 4s., sewed, vols. 7 & 8 of the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, by the author of the former volumes.'

They were a very thin instalment, and did not exhibit much industry; and abstracting what I have called his first Sentimental Jour-

ney, the rest is devoted entirely to the history of Captain Shandy's love. This episode, more continuous and unbroken than anything he had yet done, might take rank beside any of the best Shandean pictures. It was welcomed with delight, and in spite of some coarse touches here and there, which the perverse infatuation of the author would introduce, will charm generations to come. But the other portions were disfigured by a burst of more than usual grossness, and a coarse licence utterly inexcusable. The old compliment of the English Rabelais, which now in Paris had rung often in his ears, had seduced him into this excess; and the companionship of such men as Wilkes and Crebillon would not be likely to purify his taste. Even the low jest which supports the *Andouillets* story is said to have been taken from a common French jest-book, and could have been told by any French driver or ostler. And yet it is plain that he was insensible to those improprieties, and to the last believed he was fixing himself more securely in the 'easy chair' of the English Rabelais.

But much of the responsibility — as was insisted on before — rests upon the shoulders of

that public who bought and read and subscribed. '*Shandy* sells well,' was the only shape of protest that found its way to him. But when, a few months later, everything that was aristocratic, brilliant, and intellectual in England rushed to subscribe; and sermons preached by the man who preached of the Abbess of Andouillets, came 'prancing' into the world endorsed literally by the whole peerage of the country: in what light was such testimony to be accepted, save as encouragement, or at least tacit approval? Even the critical organs remonstrated gently, rather than condemned. And his old enemy, the *Monthly Review*, in a strange, bantering article, cast in the shape of a dialogue, while affecting to reprove only threw an air of burlesque over all.

As usual, Mr Sterne flung himself with enthusiasm into the heart of London delights. The old round of 'dinners, a fortnight deep,' set in with fury. He found a few seconds to write a line or two to Garrick, then being made a 'Lion' of at Paris; and to whom, in all his triumphs, have drifted over disquieting stories of the new actor Powell — the young clerk, who stepped from his desk to the stage, and whom all London was rushing to admire.

Mr Sterne had been frequently to see him, and had frequently taken the whole party where he had been dining, to the box which Mr Garrick's liberality had furnished him. He balanced the account thus: 'I am sometimes in my friend Garrick's house, but he is always in Tristram Shandy's;' and truly the heavier obligation was on the actor's side.

Very steady was Mr Sterne in this friendship. We can see how nervous he was growing about the danger from the new actor's hold upon the town. Most delicately does he hint to his friend the necessity of his prompt return. 'O, how I congratulate you for the anxiety the world continues to be under, for your return. Return, return to the few who love you, and the thousands who admire you. *The moment you set your foot* upon your stage — mark! I tell it you — by some magic irresistible power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh. . . . Powell! good Heaven! — give me some one with less smoke and more fire. There are who, like the Pharisees, still think they shall be heard for much speaking. Come — come away — my dear Garrick, and teach us another lesson.'

He always admired Mrs Garrick — the beautiful Violette: and the terms in which he used to write to Garrick of his lady, shows what has been insisted on all through this book — that all the world understood him perfectly, and that he had a sort of special privilege to *jouer les sentimens* with any lady he pleased. 'My Minerva,' he styles her, 'full rapturously will I lead her to the temple, — but you may worship with me or not; 'twill make no difference either in the truth or warmth of my devotion. Still, after all I have seen, I still maintain her peerless. . . . Adieu. I love you dearly, *and your lady better — not hobbi-horsically, but most sentimentally* and affectionately.' And Mrs Garrick, who exercised a strange fascination over all who came within her circle, had 'a real regard for him,' and often freely reproved him for his faults.*

Mr Cradock, the amateur actor and dramatist, once met him behind the scenes at Drury Lane, and found him in very low spirits. He suggested to him — what any one familiar with the dramatic power of his writings would long to suggest — that he

* Cradock's Memoirs. [Consult "Sterne and the Theatre" in *Letters and Miscellanies.*]

should try his hand at something for the stage — a comedy, for instance. He seemed greatly struck with the idea; but, 'with tears in his eyes,' adds Mr Cradock, professed his utter ignorance of the business of the stage. 'That,' said the other, 'could easily be supplied.' There is no doubt that this was but a minor difficulty, which Garrick and his many dramatic friends would have helped him over. The idea had already occurred to him; for, in one of his *Shandys*, he breaks out into an apostrophe to his friend: 'O Garrick, what a rich scene of this would thy exquisite powers make! *And how gladly would I sit down and write such another to avail myself of thy immortality, and secure my own behind it.*' But the ease and fluency with which whole *Shandys* could be reeled off was a different thing from the care and even drudgery which work for the stage entails. This perhaps was the true reason. Others, however, as will be seen later, were found to dramatise what he himself had written.

This Mr Cradock seems to have known him intimately, and once had the satisfaction of making him 'laugh heartily,' by telling him a story about Tristram Shandy. Mr Cradock

had lent a matter-of-fact gentleman a dry, philosophical work, well known to the curious as Harris's *Hermes*,* of which the gentleman read portions very steadily, and then returned it with the remark, 'that all these *imitations of Tristram Shandy* were very poor things, and *fell far short of the original*.'

It might have been about this time that Mr Sterne found himself in a company where there were several clergymen, and began to tell comic stories of his parochial experiences. How at York, after preaching at the Cathedral, an old woman whom he had observed sitting on the pulpit steps, stopped him as he came down, and asked where he would preach the following Sunday. Mr Sterne told her 'where he was to exhibit,' says the account; and on that day found her again waiting for him, when she again put the same question. The next sermon was to be at Stillington; and to his great surprise, at Stillington he found her. 'On which,' said Mr Sterne, telling the story to the clergymen, 'I prepared a sermon specially for the following Sunday, expecting to find my old woman as before, on this text:

* [*Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar* (1751), by James Harris.]

"I will grant the request of this poor widow, lest by her continual coming she weary me."' 'Why, Sterne,' said one of the company, 'you have left out the most applicable bit of the whole — "Though I fear not God, nor regard man."' It is said the retort silenced Mr Sterne for the rest of the evening.*

The jesters of society — specially those who forget the cloth they wear — very often expose themselves to these free personalities. For the clerical Tom Hood, there is always an absence of reverence. Even his friend Mr Garrick could not resist a severe remark at his expense. Once, when Sterne was declaiming loudly against some one who had neglected his wife, and saying he should be hung up at his own door, the actor, thinking of Mrs Sterne left behind in Yorkshire, said slyly, 'Sterne, you live *in lodgings!*' †

By April his London campaigning was over, and he had gone down to Bath to recruit. '*Shandy* sells well,' was still his account of the success of his new volumes. But his sermons,

* *Adams' Anecdotes.* Though no authority is given, the story is so exact in local details, I have no hesitation in accepting it as true.

† This little anecdote is given in newspapers of the day, but is to be found in many a book of 'ana.'

with which he was now 'taxing the public,' were now about going through the press. With these he was trying the now extinct fashion of a subscription list, which he reckoned would double his gains. A more dazzling army of patrons never ushered book into the world — not even Voltaire's *Henriade*. Well might he boast of it as 'the largest and most splendid list that ever pranced before a book, since subscriptions came into fashion.' This roll represented, besides, £300 in money. This was in addition to the sale of the copyright. So that he had indeed made 'a good campaign in the field of the literati,' and 'with all that contempt of money, which "*ma façon du penser*" has ever imposed on me, I shall be rich in spite of myself.' Nor did he forget those who were entitled to share his prosperity, for he sent off £100 to Paris.

It was about this period that he became acquainted with a lady of fashion and influence, 'Lady P——' the wife of Lord Percy,* who lived near Mount Street. For this lady, who was the daughter of the once omnipotent favourite, Lord Bute, Mr Sterne conceived

* She is set down in the letters as Lady P——; but there can be no reasonable doubt that it is this Lady Percy who is referred to.

one of his sentimental passions. One Tuesday evening he was to dine in Wigmore Street, but starting a little earlier than the dinner hour, strayed into the fashionable Mount Coffee House in Mount Street — called for a sheet of gilt-edged paper, and sat down to write a strangely rapturous letter to this very noble lady who lived close by. The letter has been preserved — a monument of Tristram's infatuation. On his gilt sheet of paper he sets out 'what a strange mechanical effect is produced in writing a *billet-doux* within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an inamorato' — that she has made 'a dish-clout of a soul' of him. He complains that he is kept at a distance, and despairs of getting one inch nearer; then breaks out into this extravagant rhapsody: —

'Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you — and as far as his legs could carry him? — rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily expose himself afresh, etc. . . . Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me? Does it give you pleasure to make me more unhappy — or does it add to your triumph that your eyes

and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit? I am a fool — the weakest, the most ductile — the most tender fool that ever woman tried the weakness of — and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind. It is but an hour ago that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you — and after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, of not being led into temptation — out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh, and the devil; not doubting but I should finally trample them all down under my feet — and now I am got so near you — within this vile stone's-cast of your house — I feel myself drawn into a vortex, that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box-ticket to carry me to Miss ——'s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady —— would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her. — I dine at Mr C——r's' (Mr Cowper's?) 'in Wigmore Street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till

seven, in hopes you purpose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time I shall conclude you are better disposed of — and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jogg on to the play — Curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow — except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

'Most sincerely, L. STERNE.'

This miserable letter, I think, might be accepted as a picture of the struggle that was going on in his mind all through his life. And it does seem as though some such struggle — ending usually in defeat — was what he suffered from all through. Whether Mr. Sterne spent the evening with the lady, or went off to the play, used his box ticket, and saw Miss ——, cannot be known now.* She was unhappily not likely to be too scrupulous in receiving gentlemen: for we can trace her afterwards as the subject of town talk. Many years afterwards came a divorce, and after that, scandal about Sheriff Cotes in Newgate, — altogether a discreditable finish.†

* Of course this Lady P. did not furnish a copy of this epistle. As was before noted, Mr Sterne kept a letter-book with rough drafts of his letters.

† See Selwyn, Walpole, *passim*, and a curious letter in *Nicholl's Anecdotes*.

AT HOME AGAIN

By May he was back again at Coxwould, which he began to find not 'a sweet retirement,' but 'a solitude.' Thus, when sitting in his summer-house correcting his sermons, he found himself drawn out of 'a pensive mood' by a letter from his friend Woodhouse — and to that gentleman, putting aside his sermons for a moment, he wrote his New Art of Love. 'In these cases I first endeavour to make the lady believe so — or rather, I begin first to make myself believe that I am in love — but I carry on my affairs quite in the French way, that is, "sentimentally." "*L'amour*," say they, "*n'est rien sans le sentiment.*"' This, indeed, is the true key to all Mr Sterne's affections. When he could write thus tranquilly of such light topics, he had just met with a serious misfortune, which to one of another temper would have been a very heavy blow.

He had long since handed over his Parsonage at Sutton to a curate, who took charge of that parish. One night, through the carelessness of this curate, or 'of his wife, or his maid, or some one within his gates,' it took fire and was burnt to the ground, with all Mr Sterne's furniture and Mr Sterne's books, 'a pretty collection.' The loss was close on four hundred

pounds. Mr Sterne goes on with the story — 'The poor man and his wife took the wings of the next morning and fled away. This has given me real vexation, for so much was my pity and esteem for him, that as soon as I heard of this disaster, I sent to desire that he would come and take up his abode with me till another habitation was ready to receive him; but he was gone, and, as I am told, through fear of my persecution. Heavens! how little did he know of me, to suppose I was among the number of those which heap misfortune upon misfortune. . . . . *God, who reads my heart, knows it to be true* — that I wish rather to share than to increase the burden of the miserable . . . . . as for the dirty trash of this world, I regard it not, the loss of it does not cost me a sigh.' This is fresh testimony to his goodness of heart, under a trial that would have tried another man's temper severely; and we can scarcely doubt that solemn appeal. At the moment he wrote, he felt he would be obliged to rebuild the house. 'But,' he adds, 'I lack the means at present, yet I am never happier than when I have not a shilling in my pocket; for when I have, I can never call it my own.' The name of this

unlucky curate I have discovered. He was a Mr William Raper, and had been there six years. I find that he stayed with Sterne until the following year, so that his good-natured tolerance of the misfortune was not a mere flourish.* In the same key of good spirits he wrote gaily, and with a lively freedom, to a noble friend of his, Lord Effingham — the same whom that jovial dramatist, Reynolds, knew so intimately. 'My good lord,' he began, '(for I believe you from my heart to be so, or my pen would not have belied my opinion of you: and since I have begun articles of belief give me leave to add, and I believe you to have power to be anything — but no thanks to you, etc.) As all this,' he goes on,

* It may be worth while in this place, following up the history of Sutton Parsonage House. As may be imagined, the rebuilding was put off indefinitely, and Mr Sterne died before the ruins were disturbed. His successor, Mr Cheap, tried to get something done by the widow, and has left us the result in an indignant entry in the old Sutton Registry: —

'In the year 1764, during the Incumbency of Mr Laurence Sterne, the Vicarage House was burnt down. Though frequently admonished and required to rebuild the Vicarage House, he found means to evade the Performance of it. He continued Vicar till he died in March, 1768. Andrew Cheap was appointed his successor, and was advised to accept a composition for Dilapidations from the Widow. A suit was instituted for Dilapidations, but, after a time (the widow being in indigent circumstances), sixty pounds were accepted.

'In April, 1770, the New House was begun, and finished in May, 1771.

'Total amount of suit and Building the House, £576, 13*s.* 5*d.*

'ANDREW CHEAP.'

'is included in a parenthesis, your lordship has a right to leave it out. It will not hurt the sense. I mean your own, for as for mine, the point has been long settled by the world.' He then thanks him for the subscription to the sermons, 'as well the *aimable comtesse votre chère mère*, for the honor of her name.' Mr Hall had left him 'bleeding to death at York of a small vessel in my lungs. The deuce take these bellows of mine! I must get 'em stopped, or I shall never have to *persiffler* Lord Effingham again.' He talks of the York races, where he hopes to meet his friend with 'Blaquiere and great Scroope.'

Just at this time, too, he was much entertained by the arrival of a letter from an elderly French gentleman at Montauban, in reference to his daughter Lydia. The French gentleman did not know him, but got his address at the Bureau de Poste. He then proceeded to announce that he was in love with Miss Sterne, and would be glad to know how much fortune Mr Sterne was prepared to give her at present and *how much at his death.* Mr Sterne took up his pen and answered him in true Shandean vein: — 'Sir, I shall give her ten thousand pounds the day of marriage.

My calculation is as follows: she is not eighteen, you are sixty-two — there goes five thousand; then, Sir, you at least think her not ugly, and as she has many accomplishments — speaks Italian, etc., I think you will be happy to take her on my terms, for here finishes the account of the ten thousand pounds.' It is not known how the elderly French gentleman accepted this ridicule of his proposal. It is certain, however, that Miss Sterne was not married to him.

His health was again warning him to move; in fact, though unconscious of it, he was fast hurrying into consumption. At the end of July he found his 'plaguy cough' gaining ground; 'and it will bring me to my grave, in spight of me. But while I have strength to run away from it I will. I have been wrestling with it for these twenty years past, and what with laughter and good spirits have prevented its giving me a fall; but my antagonist presses closer than ever upon me.' With these forebodings, he had already fixed his departure for October. But by September he received significant warnings to hasten his movements. The old enemy, 'the most violent spitting of blood mortal man experi-

enced,' again seized upon him; and he had to set off for York to try and recruit himself. This was when Mr Hall had left him 'bleeding to death.' These constant attacks seemed at times to dispirit him; and he spoke of going to York, not for the sake of society, nor to walk by the side of the muddy 'Ouse,' but 'because I had rather (in case 'tis ordered so) *die there than in a postchaise on the road.*'

Still he was the old fitful Yorick, and was the next moment cheerful as ever. A friend dropped in and stayed many hours, listening with delight to his sallies. Going away, the friend met a local apothecary, who asked him how he did. 'Ill, ill,' said the friend; 'I have been with Sterne, who has given me such a dose of *Attic* Salt that I am in a fever.'

'Attic Salt, sir, Attic Salt,' said the apothecary; 'I have Glauber Salt in my shop, Epsom Salt— Oh! I suppose 'tis some French salt. I wonder you would trust his report of the medicine; he cares not what he takes himself.' Had this incident occurred but a few years before, it might have served to increase the ridicule poured on the head of the unhappy Slop.

As usual, he looked forward with delight to

meeting his London and Paris friends again. This thought made him forget all past physical suffering. 'I long,' he wrote, 'to embrace my friends in London.' He had finally determined on his long-talked-of scheme — the tour in Italy — where he was to spend nine or ten months, call to see his wife and daughter on his road, and be back by the King's birthday. 'What a project!' he exclaimed with rapture. Profit, pleasure, and health, were to be all combined in the trip. *En attendant*, he wrote to his friend Mrs. Meadows to come down and see him. 'I will give you,' he wrote, 'a roast fowl for your dinner, and a clean table-cloth every day, and tell you a story by way of dessert. In the heat of the day we will sit in the shade, and in the evening the fairest of all milkmaids who pass by my gate shall weave a garland for you.' This sentimental key, which he was always privileged to assume, quite bears out the view of Mr Sterne's character we have dwelt on all through this book. It was his regular manner with ladies. He winds up with the more prosaic, 'God bless you, my dear madam.'

At last, about the first week in October, he was up in London once more, and had written

to Paris to order a wig — *à bourse* — from Madam Requière in the Rue St Sauveur; 'for it is a terrible thing to be in Paris without a Perwig to one's head.' By the eighth or ninth he had put up the pair of black silk breeches, had taken his place in the Dover stage, and was fairly started on that famous expedition known as the Sentimental Journey. His last thought, however, was careful provision for his family; and before he started he paid into Mr Becket's hands six hundred pounds, upon which Mrs Sterne might draw. The packet sailed at nine the next morning, and by three he was sitting down to dinner in Mons. Dessein's Hotel, at Calais, — a hotel which, but for that visit, would not have emerged from the ranks of ordinary houses of entertainment.

MR STERNE GOES TO OLD CALAIS

CHAPTER VI

MR STERNE GOES TO OLD CALAIS

IN starting on this new Sentimental Tour, Mr Sterne resolved to be guided by principles wholly opposite to those of the professional travellers who had preceded him. 'I pity the man,' he wrote in a famous passage, 'who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and cry 'tis all barren.' He met Smelfungus, his name for Smollett, in the grand portico of the Pantheon, '"'Tis nothing but a huge cock-pit," said he.' Most justly did Mr Sterne say that the novelist only wrote an account of 'his own miserable feelings.'

Calais is or was an interesting old town, and always seems redolent of Sterne. Some twenty years ago its yellow walls were standing, the drawbridges down, and best of all, the old Dessein's Hotel, with its 'Sterne's Room,' was still shown. It was a pleasant, inviting place, having something of the air of

a country house, having its yellow archway and large courtyard, round which ran the buildings. There were vines and general greenery, and over the archway little roofed dormer windows. Of a summer's Sunday, when there was a *fête* going on in the town, it was a pleasant thing to make an excursion over there and join in the genuine French festivity. The old inn, their town museum, was thrown open, and you could wander through its chambers and pause in Sterne's room, still labelled with his name. Behind it were fair gardens of great extent, at the bottom of which stood the theatre, which formerly belonged to the hotel. Now all has been pulled down and levelled to the ground, and a huge communal school erected on the ruins.

On his now famous *Sentimental Journey*, the best known of his writings, he had started with a famous compliment to the French, 'They order this matter better in France,' which is always misquoted, 'they manage things better in France.' Putting by 'half a dozen shirts and a black pair of silk breeches,' he got down to Dover; 'and the packet sailing at nine, by three I had sat down to a din-

ner of fricasseed chicken.' 'After all,' wrote Mr Walpole, 'Calais surprised me more than anything I have since seen.' The justness of which impression, every one who recalls the look of his first French town, will acknowledge. Mr Sterne had walked through the great Place, and owned that nothing struck him more 'though I cannot say 'tis either well-paved or well-built; but 'tis in the heart of the town, and most of the streets, especially those in that quarter, all terminate in it.' And the old church tower, too, seems to have attracted him, though not so much as it was to do a later visitor — when a noble artist, and a yet nobler thinker, was to translate its poetry into rich English. 'I cannot find words,' says the author of *Modern Painters*, 'to express the intense pleasure I have always felt in first finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the tower of Calais church. The large neglect, the noble mightiness of it, the record of its years written so vividly, yet without sign of weakness or decay: its stern vastness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds and overgrown with bitter sea-grass. . . . I cannot tell half the strange pleasure and thoughts

that come about me at the sight of that old tower.' *

The English travellers of fashion, disgusted at last by 'the particular hardships imposed on Mr D——,' anxiously encouraged the opening of a new hotel, to be called the Hôtel d'Angleterre, under the management of young Dessein. The *Sentimental Journey* did the rest.

Dessein's grew to be a sort of fashion. The proprietor knew all the tide of nobility that flowed through the little town, and was useful in looking after any packages of theirs passing between London and Paris. The Inn, meanwhile, was considered to be the most extensive in Europe, and contained squares, gardens, shops of all kinds, workshops, and a handsome theatre. Still, notwithstanding this prosperity, the management broke down, and the famous Dessein went

* For myself personally I have the most romantic associations with the old town, from the day I first saw it in past years, when I came rumbling into it in an old diligence that had taken nearly the whole day to journey from Boulogne. It was then surrounded by its old walls, and fortifications, and gates — Richelieu's among the rest — and had still a number of refugee English living there. A few years ago the walls and gates were levelled, and the ditches filled up. It has now become a modern town. I recall a Sunday *fête* here which I went over to see, and was delighted to wander through the old Dessin, or Dessein, Hotel, and peep into Sterne's room.

nigh to becoming bankrupt; but it was whispered that, so important was the establishment considered in its international bearings, that the government advanced him a sum of money free of interest, and helped him back to prosperity.

There are many portraits of him, for every traveller made it a point to stay at his Inn, and, in addition, was specially anxious to record that he *had* been there. All these likenesses agree in setting him forth as a smooth, plausible, greedy, money-getting French innkeeper, turning a penny upon his chaises and Louis d'ors, accompanying all his transactions with stately self-abnegation and a parade of noble sentiments. Our traveller had been writing his preface in his *désobligeante*, and was followed to his room by 'Monsieur Dessein, the master of the hotel, who had *just returned from vespers*, and, with his hat under his arm, was most complaisantly following me to put me in mind of my wants.' He spoke of the little carriage 'with a shrug *as if it would no way suit me*,' and then it occurred to Mr Sterne that it might have belonged to some traveller who left it to Monsieur Dessein's care to dispose of. Mr

Sterne then reports the dramatic dialogue that ensued: '"Now, was I master of this hotel," said I, laying the point of my forefinger on Monsieur Dessein's breast, "I would inevitably make a point of getting rid of this unfortunate *désobligeante* — it stands swinging reproaches at you every time you pass by it." "Mon Dieu!" said Monsieur Dessein; "I have no interest—" "Except the interest," said I, "which men of a certain turn of mind take in their own sensations. You suffer as much as the machine—" Monsieur Dessein made me a bow. "*C'est bien vrai*," said he.'

At the *remise* door, Monsieur Dessein, 'diabled the key above fifty times before he found out that he had come with the wrong one in his hand.'

About a year after Sterne's death, the famous inn, or a portion of it, was burnt. The chamber in which the sentimental traveller drank to the King of France, and grew agitated over the *droit d'aubaine*, and the windows from which he had curiously scanned the 'Janatones' of Calais (not connected with the fishing interest) tripping across the Place, were all swept away in the

conflagration. But M. Dessein was not to suffer. A whole company of English milords and aristocratic travellers — perhaps the most perverse grumblers at his extortions — came forward gallantly with sufficient funds to build him a fine new hostelry.

Many years ago a traveller * halting at Dessein's was shown 'No. Thirty-one,' and the Sir Joshua mezzotint over the chimney-piece, and yet was sceptical. The outside of the house was all overgrown with vine-leaves, and shrewdly suspecting there might be some record of the date of erection cut on the stone he sent up a man on a ladder to cut away the vine-leaves, an operation which led to the discovery of a tablet,

A.D. 1770,

just two years too late for the credit of 'Sterne's Room.' The waiter, however, in no way disconcerted, offered to fix on another room in the house, and call it Sterne's ! †

Long after Mr Sterne had passed away, the

* [The traveller was John Poole, the wit and dramatist, who wrote an account of his journey for the *London Magazine* in 1825.]

† I am inclined to doubt this story, as the building always looked much later than the date mentioned.

monk used to come in asking alms, being preserved as a sort of imperishable institution. Such an one — a gentle, resigned-looking man, almost 'mild, pale, and penetrating' — presented himself to the late Mr Rogers and his friend, as they were sitting over their wine; and the friend, to the gentle poet's annoyance, made some such speech as Mr Sterne made to his monk. 'Il faut travailler,' said Mr Rogers' friend; and the monk, bowing his head, meekly withdrew without a word. Mrs Piozzi must have seen this very famous monk, whom she calls Father Felix, and whose 'manners and story,' she says, struck Doctor Johnson exceedingly when he came through. The great moralist pronounced that so complete a character could scarcely be found in romance. He had been, like Mr Sterne's monk, a soldier; knew English; read Addison, and played on the violin. He had been seen there about the year 1772, only five years after the Sentimental Journey, and was remarkable then; so it does seem likely that he was Mr Sterne's Father Lorenzo. And Mrs Piozzi was glad to hear that he was alive, and had only gone into Spain.

Dessein had one famous customer, the notorious bigamist, the famous Duchess of Kingston, who was pleased either with his assistance, his sympathy, or his entertainment, and is actually said to have left him two thousand pounds in her will. And with this notable connection, the grim figure of the one-eyed innkeeper — Mr Sterne's famous host — fades out — at what precise date I have not been able to discover. But a traveller stopping there, in 1815, found that it was not then held by any one of the name. It had come down to his son, and the son's daughter marrying one Quillacq — a familiar name in its way also — still directed the hotel. Finally came the enthusiastic traveller before described, about the year 1825, who found Quillacq 'directing,' and Mr Sterne's mezzotint hung up in No. Thirty-one, and the memory of what was reverently styled 'the Great Dessein' almost more tenderly cherished. But the traces of the great sentimentalist had faded. All that could be remembered was, that a *garçon*, who had personally attended on him, had died a few years before.

Not long since, arriving at the old town at

midnight, I walked up along the piers towards the town. Passing through the dark streets I emerged in the Place, and at that moment the silvery chimes began performing in the picturesque steeple of the Town Hall. Beside it rose the grim old watch tower, formerly a lighthouse. Passing down a side street I found myself before the present Dessein's, formerly Quillacq's, and which is quite as old as was the old Dessein. A quaint house it is too, with rather stately, faded chambers, and a grand stair with banisters of flowing design, which ascend to the right and left. A worthy old French lady, Madame Dessein, still presided, and is glad to talk with the sympathetic stranger of the glory of her mansion, of '*feu* M. Sterne,' and of the sad story of the purchase of the old hotel by the town, M. le Préfet himself coming to wait on her, and to assure her it was for the good and welfare of the place. She was '*trop bonne Calaisienne*,' she said with tears, to resist such pressure. She told me that the present proprietor was, I think, the great-grandson of the original Dessein. Many years ago this advertisement was to be read in *Bradshaw*: —

OLD CALAIS

'CALAIS — HOTEL DESSEIN — L. Dessein, the proprietor, has the honor to inform his numerous Patrons and Travellers in general, that, after the 1st of January, His Establishment will be transferred to the Hôtel Quillacq, which has been entirely new done up, and will take the name of "Hôtel Dessein." The premises of the old Hôtel having been purchased by the Town of Calais, it ceases to be a Hôtel for Travellers.'

There is a quaint dignity about this proclamation. The 'numerous patrons and travellers in general' of that day — it is forty years — pass from the boat to other new and more tempting hotels, and indeed do not approach within half a mile of the town. On the night that I paid my midnight visit, there was only another traveller besides myself in Dessein's *en transit*.

Pursuing his road from Calais, the traveller came to Montreuil. All along the journey he spoke his indifferent French, at least if what he spoke be reflected in what he wrote. But he was unconscious of his curious blunders, and did not care to make the common corrections. The original MS. of this journey is still to be seen, carefully and cleanly written out from his rough draught, and as carefully gone over for final alterations. And yet the French blunders are jealously preserved.

The inn at Montreuil where Mr Sterne put up, though he has not mentioned its name, or its proprietor's, can be discovered — yet with some difficulty. Thirty years ago, in the diligence times, all the inns along the route claimed to be Mr Sterne's inn, and each had a 'Sterne's Room,' with the portrait after Sir Joshua over the chimney-piece. In Montreuil there were two claiming the distinction, and the visitor was shown two Sterne's rooms and two pictures. One was the Hôtel de l'Europe, whose claim vanishes in a second, it only dating from the beginning of the present century. But there was another old inn, reputed the oldest in the town, situate on the Green, where the *fêtes* and merry-makings have always been held, and where La Fleur danced and played his fiddle, and which bore the name of the Hôtel de la Cour de France. It was kept, thirty years ago, by the family of Varennes; and the Varennes told travellers the inn had been in their family, from father to son, beyond the recollection of men.

The legend in the hotel was, that Sterne had given them the privilege of calling it Sterne's favourite house, and they put into the

guest's hand a little card, with the following inscription: —

VARENNES.

HOTEL DE LA COUR DE FRANCE.

A COTE DE LA POSTE AU CHEVAUX,

MONTREUIL.

STERNE'S FAVOURITE HOUSE.

We have even a sketch of the landlord, who corrected Mr Sterne's French, and who came in to tell him 'of the clever young fellow who would be proud to serve an Englishman.' Dr Warner rallied him on being '*gros crevé*,' and '*bon rieur*.' We see his rotund figure standing before Mr Sterne, and telling him how *un milord Anglais presentoit un écu a la femme-de-chambre*.*

And it was this 'tant-mieux' M. Varennes that introduced La Fleur, the most famous of valets. For Mr Sterne was prepossessed at the first glance with his 'genuine look and air,' and at once hired him. He had lost his portmanteau from behind his chaise, and got

* All through his account Mr Sterne confounds 'a lady's-maid' with 'a house-maid.' The reader need scarcely be reminded that *presenter* has not the meaning of giving a present; and that, even if it had, there is a mistake in the grammatical case.

out in the rain, and 'up to the knees in dirt,' to help the postilion to fasten it on, before he found out that he required a servant. La Fleur was exactly suited to him. He could, indeed, professionally only 'make splatter-dashes, and play on the fiddle, beat a drum, and do something on the fife,'— but 'a Frenchman can do everything.' He was just fitted for Mr Sterne, having a sort of even 'festivity of temper,' which, through all annoyances and discomforts, never was disturbed. He had, besides, a small cast of a coxcomb, but more a coxcomb of nature than of art; 'was always in love;' and, as the landlord remarked, when pointing him out from the inn, taking leave of the village girls, '*C'est un garçon de bonne fortune!*' *

Then comes the well-known beggar scene, when Mr Sterne was getting into his chaise; La Fleur's adventure on the bidet; and the pathetic picture of 'the Dead Ass' before the

* '*Bonnes Fortunes*,' must the landlord have said. To put together a few more of these droll mistakes of Mr Sterne, La Fleur speaks of his horse as being '*le cheval le plus-opiniâtre du monde*;' a mysterious adjective, which no Frenchman would ever use in such a sense. 'It is not *mal à propos* to take notice here,' instead of *hors de propos*. Madame Lambert writes to him that she has been prevented telling her story from some '*penchant*,'—another non-natural sense. At the Amiens Hotel there was a *femme de chambre*; and in the same page, 'Madame de Lambert sends her *fille de chambre*.'

door of the post-house at Nampont. And the traveller of this day will have to halt 'at the foot of the steep hill, about a league from Nampont,' where Mr Sterne was shouting to his postilion — one more bit of testimony to his wonderful accuracy. So he passed on to Amiens, where La Fleur played on his fife while the servants danced, and where Mr Sterne copied the drummer's letter, and sent it in to Madame Lambert. Before the 20th of October, he was in Paris, and had put up at the Hôtel de Modène, Rue Jacob, in the Faubourg St Germain.

SECOND VISIT TO PARIS

CHAPTER VII

SECOND VISIT TO PARIS

PARIS at the season of this second visit was very gay, and full of English: and Mr Sterne, as he stood at the hotel window in his 'dusty black coat,' looking out, seeing 'all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure, the old with broken lances, the young in armour bright, which shone like gold,' grew dispirited. But morally, a more striking change had taken place. The taste for amateur philosophy had developed into a *fureur*. Men and women, and fashionable men and women, had all become, or affected to be, *philosophers;* and followed out their worship with the stern self-sacrifice of true children of fashion. This craze infected every boudoir, and destroyed every pleasure. Conversation — parties — everything had grown insufferably stupid. There were 'swarms of English' in Paris; but

with them he could not bring himself to mix. Among these swarms of English was Sir James Macdonald, a young Scotch baronet, a great friend of Mr Sterne's. About this young man, though no more than a mere sketch in literary history, a deep interest seems to hang. He is seen for a moment in Boswell's Tour, and exercised a sort of attraction on every one he met. Here, too, was another friend of Mr Sterne's, Mr Crawford, well known as 'Fish' Crawford, and brother to 'Flesh' Crawford, to whom the weak, elegant Carlisle used to lose large sums. 'One of the gayest young gentlemen,' says his valet, 'and, the greatest gambler that ever belonged to Scotland.' Here, too, was Lord Ossory, Mr Fitzmaurice, who had been a pupil of Adam Smith's, and Lord William Gordon, all friends of Mr Sterne; and here, too, was that blasphemous parson, John Horne Tooke.

Mr Sterne was not likely to let the laugh languish. In French society he was more popular than ever; and he has given an amusing account of the arts by which he turned the grave, philosophising mania to his own profit. On his first visit he had made friends in all directions. He knew the Count de Bissie,

who affected to be reading Shakspeare when he called, the Marquise de Lambert, the old Marshal de Biron, 'who had signalised himself by some small feats of chivalry in the Cour d'Amour, and many more. The marshal talked of a visit to England, and of the English ladies. 'Stay where you are, I beseech you, Monsieur le Marq*uise*, Les Messieurs Anglaise (*sic*) can scarce get a kind look from them as it is.' The old beau invited him to supper at once. His compliment to the Farmer-General, M. Popelinère, at whose concerts we have seen him 'assisting,' was just as skilful. He was asking about the English taxes; they were considerable, he heard. 'If we knew how to collect them,' said Mr Sterne, with a bow. A lady, Madame de V—— (this must have been Madame de Vence, a descendant of Madame de Sévigné), placed Mr Sterne by her on the sofa to discuss religion. She believed nothing. 'There are three epochs,' says Mr Sterne, in one of his most acute observations on society, 'in the empire of a Frenchwoman. She is coquette; then deist; then *dévote*. The empire during these is never lost; she only changes her subjects.' Madame de Vence was only vibrating between

her first and second. Yorick took her hand and mildly remonstrated with her. There was not a more dangerous thing in the world than for a beauty to be a deist. The restraints of religion and morality were the outworks which protected her. 'We are not adamant,' he continued, 'and there is need of all restraint, till age in her own time steals in and lays them on us; but, my dearest lady,' said I, kissing her hand, 'it is too soon — too soon.'

Mr Sterne had the credit all over Paris of converting Madame de Vence. She told Diderot and the Abbé Morellet, that 'in one half-hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their encyclopædia had said against it.' She postponed the epoch of her Deism two years.

In this fashion he became popular, and heard on all sides such flattering testimonies as '*pardi, ce Monsieur Yorick a d'ésprit. C'est un bon enfant;*' and abundance of such praise. But to his credit he grew ashamed of 'the dishonest reckoning,' though at this price he could have 'eaten and drank and been merry all the days of my life at Paris.' It seemed to him the gain of a slave. He had the courage to make this honest confession,

although he had many French subscribers to his book and of this very coterie.

It is pleasant to follow in Mr Sterne's footsteps, and we can even track him to his Paris hotel. There were very many Hôtels de Modène in that time — forty years ago there were ten to be counted — but to Sterne's Hôtel de Modène we find a guide in the famous *femme de chambre* whom he met in the bookseller's shop, buying *Les Egaremens.* He had sent for a perruquier to set his hair to rights; and then 'taking down the name of the Hôtel de Modène, went forth for a walk from where I lodged,' — to have a look at Paris.

It was evening, and he thought he would visit the Opéra Comique — so turning into the glove shop, he asked the way of that 'beautiful grisset,' who was sitting 'on the far side of the shop, facing the door,' working a pair of ruffles — a little scene which inspired Newton with a fresh Leslie-like cabinet picture. '"You must turn, monsieur," said she, going with me to the door of the shop, "first to your left-hand — *mais prenez garde* — there are two turns, and be so good as to take the second; then go down a little way and you'll

see a church, and when you are past it, give yourself the trouble to turn directly to the right, and that brings you to the foot of the Pont Neuf, which you must cross; and there anyone will do himself the pleasure to show you." She repeated her instructions three times over to me, with the same good-natured patience the third time as the first' — a trait, as well as that getting up and going to the door, truly French, and consistent with their good-natured politeness to strangers.

Mr Sterne had forgotten his way home, and he went part of the way with her until he reached the Rue de Nevers, where they were to take different roads. 'Is this the way, my dear,' said he, 'to the Hôtel de Modène?' She said it was, or, 'that I might go by the Rue de Guénégaud, which was the next turn.' She, herself, was going to the Rue St Pierre, to which the Rue Guénégaud would also take her; and it would lead Mr Sterne to the Rue Jacob, and to his hotel. This House was said to be opposite the Rue des Deux Anges, on the side of the Rue des Petits Augustins.*

* These notes are from the *London Magazine*, and were written by Poole of facetious memory. It has been stated (in *Notes and Queries*) that he was all astray here, and that Sterne had confounded the Rue St Pierre with the Rue des Saint Pères, and that there is no Rue St Pierre on the south side of the river.

He could have stayed scarcely three weeks, and then set out on his Italian tour. He made one of a party and travelled with some 'English of distinction.' He also took his servant, La Fleur, with him.

This famous valet has a history of his own. After Mr Sterne's death he often came to England, sometimes as a servant* to travelling gentlemen, sometimes 'as an express.' Friends of Mr Sterne, who had heard of him, or were glad to meet with him, used to ask him about his deceased master, and the Sentimental Journey, and got from him a few facts which crept into the public journals of the day. These valet chronicles† are in most cases suspicious; the 'valet-mind,' being in its most favourable aspect likely to take a mean and distorted view of domestic events, but more frequently inclined to fill up their meagre recollections with invention. The La Fleur narrative, though theatrical in parts, is not trustworthy. He was born in Burgundy, and

* Not a sergeant, as Sir Walter Scott quotes it.

† A few scraps are to be found in Davis's *Olio*, and were copied by Sir Walter Scott; but the more important passages were passed over. Mr Miles has shown in his interesting recollections that these notes are likely to have been the work of Latude, the hero of the escape from the Bastille. Latude claimed to have been La Fleur.

ran away from his parents to Paris at eight years old. He was found one day on the Pont Neuf by a recruiting sergeant, and enlisted by him as a drummer. For six years he beat the drum, and 'made splatterdashes,' and in two more would have obtained his discharge; but his gipsy temper again prompted him to run away. He came to Montreuil, was engaged by Sterne, 'ragged as a colt,' and was now, in the first week of November, a most unseasonable time for travelling, setting off with him to Italy. A little farther on we shall take up his life and sham adventures.

Mr Sterne now set off on his 'Grand Tour.' He got down to Lyons very pleasantly, having met 'Maria' on the road near Moulines. I am inclined to believe that this Maria picture has been much coloured up; and that finding her so admired in his last volume, Mr Sterne could not resist the temptation of bringing her on again. No doubt he found the hint near Moulines, in some distressed girl sitting on the roadside, who may have moved his compassion. At Lyons, the party halted for some days, and had 'a joyous time.' The commandant was very hospitable, and had Mr Sterne to dine and sup every day. He left

behind him there Lord F. W——, and about a dozen English. We are able to identify one at least of the 'dozen English' who were then at Lyons, and that an Englishman of some mark — John Horne Tooke — who had been in Paris, having flung away his clergyman's gown at Dover, and was flaunting it, not in a 'dusty black coat,' but in 'a suit of scarlet and gold,' or 'white and silver,' or 'blue and silver.' He met Sterne at Lyons every day for a week, and planned to meet him again at Sienna during the summer. They often spoke of their common friend, Wilkes. But Tooke remarked that though Mr Sterne mentioned the famous demagogue 'handsomely,' yet he never spoke of him with warmth or cordiality. 'Forgive my question,' wrote that strange clergyman to Wilkes from Montpellier, 'and do not be annoyed if I inquire, is there any coldness between you and Sterne?' In the next letter the latter wrote to Paris from Pont Beauvoisin — he is pointed in his remembrances, — 'If Wilkes is at Paris, *I send him all kind wishes.*'

They got on to Pont Beauvoisin,* where

* Mr Sterne, as usual, mistaking the names of places, calls it Beau Pontvoisin.

begin those wonderful Savoy passes which have since become marvellous trophies of engineering; but there they were obliged to stop, for the rough mountain weather suddenly set in.

The voiturin was eight days taking him through that grand mountain scenery. Again at the close of the story of his journey we have delightful little glimpses, full of local colour and exquisite pastoral effect. Charming, indeed, that night piece at the hamlet, while he looked on at where the 'old man' played the vielle for the dance, and the girls ran to tie up their hair — which makes a perfect *pendant* to that other picture which he saw in the Bourbonnois, on his first journey. He was delighted with that 'poor, patient, quiet, honest people,' and was tempted into the false prophecy, that 'your poverty *will not be envied you by the world*, nor will your *valleys be invaded by it*.'

At last he came to the picturesque little town of St Michel. Late of a wintry evening he was pushing on to Modane, through mountain, wind, and rain — a 'tempestuous night' — when the voiturin halted his mules suddenly, and found the road blocked up by a

The Old Man Played the Vielle for the Dance

Stothard del.
Blake Sculp.

The Old Man Played the Vielle for the Dance

Stothard del.
Blake Sculp.

huge fragment of rock which the cataract of the Arc had brought down from the mountains. The rude peasants of the place were hard at work labouring to clear the road; but late as it was, and long as they had been working, it would take two more hours before the way would be open. The whole is a picture: the darkness, the tumbling cataracts, the wind, the rain; the grand mountains; the peasants labouring by torchlight, and the voiturin and his mules waiting expectant, with the pale face of Mr Sterne looking from the window.

We can only regret the infatuation which could have led him to disfigure all with the coarse suggestion which soils the last page of the *Sentimental Journey*. Otherwise the scene is admirably graphic and humorous, stamped with a genuine air of truth, and did not need that fatal touch at the end to have been a most ludicrous and Shandean embarrassment. It has been truly remarked that these gross strokes have brought their own heavy penalty; for they have dragged down with them exquisite scenes which would have made his book a delightful drawing-room book, and consigned

them for ever to a proscribed corner in the library.*

But this dramatic adventure did not occur to Mr Sterne himself. I have been enabled to trace it as 'a good thing,' which he heard from one of his jovial friends. It was an adventure that befel 'John Crawford, Esq., of Errol,' better known as 'Fish' Crawford, a wild, gambling Scotchman, and one of the March-Carlisle set. Him Mr Sterne met both in Paris and London; and from him he must have heard the embarrassment of the lady at the rustic inn, where there was no room.

It was between Verviers and Aix-la-Chapelle that 'Fish' Crawford met her. The house was full, and he had got the best bedroom, off which there was a closet. It was a Flemish lady and her maid, instead of a Piedmontese lady, as Mr Sterne put it. Madame Blond was her name. She sent up her compliments, 'would she be allowed to sit in the gentleman's room until bedtime?' Mr Crawford was 'very complaisant.' They played cards together to decide who should

* In the Guide Books, Modane is usually set out as the locality of 'the last scene in the *Sentimental Journey*,' whereas it took place five miles from that town.

have the large bedroom or the little closet inside, and the lady lost. It is very curious, stumbling on this, and, more curious still, hearing it from the mouth of a valet. But though Mr Sterne tells his version with humour, the delicacy is all on the side of the valet.*

He reached Turin at last, and was established there by the 15th of November. He was delighted with his first Italian city — just as he had been with Paris; and was 'very happy' during the fortnight he stayed. With his usual success, he had been there scarcely a day before he had been secured at half-a-dozen houses of distinction. He was to be presented to the King, and after that ceremonial would have his hands full of engagements. Turin was at that time a gay little capital, though under the tyranny of a strict etiquette, and was very stately in all its manners and observances. He found no English there but his friend Sir James Macdonald and Mr Ogilvy, so all this festivity was from native families.

After a 'joyous fortnight,' during which they met with 'all kinds of honours,' they

* See the *Travels of John Macdonald, a Cadet of the Family of Keppoch*, who was servant to 'Fish' Crawford.

departed reluctantly. Sir James Macdonald and Mr Sterne were to travel together through Milan and the smaller Italian cities which dot the 'Grand Tour,' on to Rome. They would both like to have stayed. 'But,' said Mr Sterne, 'health on my side, and good sense on his, say 'tis better to be at Rome.' As it fell out, it will be seen that these two motives were curiously shifted. From Turin he found time to write to Mrs Sterne, under cover to his banker, and then entered his chaise. Their next stage was Milan.

Here it was that Mr Sterne met a little adventure which he tells very pleasantly. He was going to Martini's concert, and was just entering the door of the hall, when he met an Italian lady, the Marquesina F——, 'coming out in a sort of a hurry; she was almost upon me before I saw her. So I gave a spring to one side to let her pass. She had done the same, and on the same side too, so we ran our heads together. She instantly got to the other side to get out. I was just as unfortunate as she had been, for I had sprung to that side, and opposed the passage again — we both flew together to the other side, and then back, and so on; it was ridiculous; we both blushed

intolerably; so I did at last the thing I should have done at first. I stood stock still, and the Marquesina had no more difficulty.' After a moment's hesitation, Mr Sterne, than whom no one was more skilful in improving an opening, ran after her; and the description of his behaviour is worth quoting, as a specimen of that easy manner which was the secret of his fascination. He first apologised for his awkwardness, saying, 'it was my intention to have made her way. She answered she was guided by the same intention towards me, so we reciprocally thanked each other. She was at the top of the stairs, and seeing no *chicesbee* near, I begged to hand her to her coach. So we went down the stairs, stopping at every step to talk of the concert and the adventure. "Upon my word, madame," said I, when I had handed her in, "I made six different attempts to let you go out." "And I made six efforts," replied she, "to let you enter." "I wish to heaven you would make a seventh," said I. "With all my heart," said she, making room. Life is too short to be long about the forms of it. So I instantly stepped in. And the acquaintance that arose out of this little transaction,' Mr Sterne adds, gave him

more pleasure than any one he made in Italy.

The Marquesina F—— seems a name almost hieroglyphical; but curious to say, we can discover who she was. It is pleasant to know every one who came in contact with Mr Sterne. Arthur Young passed through Milan some years later, and saw this very lady, but, gifted with less discretion than Mr Sterne, gave her name. It was the Marquesina Fagniani. Which touches another chord of association; for this was the very lady who figures so curiously in Selwyn's Life, the mother of little Mie Mie, the little child about whom he made himself almost ridiculous, exciting the smiles and pity of his friends. The whole makes a strange chapter in the history of human absurdity.*

From Milan they travelled on to Parma. They travelled '*à la hâte*,' and many places they merely passed through. They visited Piacenza and Bologna, halting a short time at each (La Fleur adds the little Duchy of Modena to the list), and having weather all the time 'as delicious as a kindly April in Eng-

* In an account of Ugo Foscolo's life it has been stated that one of his ardent attachments was for a daughter of the lady.

land,' found themselves suddenly among the deep snows of the Apennines. They were at Florence by the 18th of December, and remained, Mr Sterne says, but three days, 'to dine with the Minister (Walpole's Sir Horace Mann, just promoted to be Envoy),' where they were to meet Lords Townshend* and Cowper;† and then they looked forward 'to treading the Vatican, and being introduced to all the saints in the Pantheon,' within five days. He wrote again from Florence to Mrs Sterne.

They then passed on to Rome, and hurried down to Naples. There he put up at the Casa di Mansel, and remained several weeks. It seems to have been charming. He revelled in the delightful air of the place, and the meagre figure of Yorick was actually 'growing fat, sleek, and well-liking, not improving in stature, but in breadth.' He enjoyed himself thoroughly. There were some five-and-twenty English there; but he found his way, as usual, into the best Italian society. He had letters to 'Prince Cardito d'Offredo,' who behaved to him, according to the quaint and

* [This should be "Tichfield."]
† Lord C——r, it is given in the letter.

more old-fashioned comprehensiveness of the word, with 'great politeness.' He was there during the Carnival, which was 'jolly — nothing but operas, punchinellos, festinos, and masquerades.'

On the fifth of February, 'we, that is, *nous autres*, were all dressing out' for a superb entertainment which was to be given by the Princess Francavivalla; and the significance of '*nous autres*' lay in confining it merely to the English, who were to dine with her 'exclusive.' No wonder he was 'happy as a king,' and found the 'climate heavenly.' He discovered 'new principles of health' within, and fondly hoped to have added ten years to his life by the journey. In the midst of all this festivity he did not forget those on the other side of the Alps. Three days after the Princess Francavivalla's grand entertainment he wrote to his banker, to desire he would 'let Mrs Sterne have what cash she wants.' He explains that he has hardly used any of the letters of credit he had been furnished with, having taken up 'no more than about fifty louis at Turin, as much at Rome' — and as he had a plan for travelling home in the quality of 'bear leader,' he would draw for little more

till his return, 'so you will always have enough to spare for my wife. The beginning of March, be so kind as to let her have a hundred pounds to begin the year with.'

To his 'dear girl' he wrote about the same time, as usual affectionately, and yet with a dash of melancholy, which, though the 'Princess Francavivalla's' masquerade was coming on, was quite characteristic of Yorick. They had been at Tours (Mrs and Miss Sterne had their little enjoyments too), and were talking of going to Bourges en Bresse. They had made the acquaintance of a Mr and Mrs C——, who had been very kind to them. Miss Sterne had attracted a 'little French admirer,' and a Marquis de ——, who had introduced himself as an intimate friend of Mr Sterne's, but who proved to be an impostor. 'I desire,' wrote the father to his 'dear girl,' 'you will get your mother to write to Mr C——, that I may discharge every debt; and then, my Lydia, if I live, the produce of my pen shall be yours. If fate reserved me not that, the humane and good, part for thy father's sake, part for thy own, will never abandon thee. If your mother's health will permit her to return to England, your sum-

mers I will render as agreeable as I can at Coxwould — your winters at York.' The gay and the heartless are not always thus provident of those at a distance.*

His friend Sir James Macdonald had gone with him to Naples, and was in the same house; but was suffering from a dreadful attack of ague or rheumatism, which must have been some local malaria fever. Its remains he took with him on to Rome, where he died in the July of the same year, a few weeks after Mr Sterne left. He was but twenty-five years old; and in an inscription which his friend, Lord Lyttleton, wrote for a memorial tablet, and which Boswell read at Skye, it is stated that, notwithstanding the difference of religion at Rome, 'such extraordinary honours were paid to his memory as had never graced that of any other British subject since the death of Sir Philip Sidney.'

Mr Sterne had posted to Rome to be in time for the Holy Week. He was treated there with great distinction. It is said he used to walk alone and read aloud in the

* It is something to find that Mr Southey — who was not likely to judge too gently of a character like Sterne's — was struck by these letters from abroad. He owned they refuted the popular notion of neglect and indifference.

Medici gardens. He had the best introductions to the noble families of Doria, Santa Croce, etc. At Rome, too, he sat for one of the fine portrait busts which, like the Reynolds' portrait, seem almost unique for their life and characteristic expression. This was done in terra-cotta. He was reduced to inconvenient straits for want of money, and the 'sentimental stranger' used to be pointed at with a sort of pity as he wandered about in deep dejection. It was even insinuated by his valet, that in these difficulties some of the noble families came forward and helped him. The story seems incredible. We see from his own letters that Panchaud had a correspondent at Rome, the Marquis Belloni (mentioned in Wilkes' letters), a great banker, with whom all the English had their accounts, and upon him Mr Sterne had letters of credit. No Englishman abroad, with friends of distinction, is likely to be refused money at a banker's.

On his first visit he fell in with a 'good-hearted young gentleman,' a Mr E——, whom he had met some three years before, and whom he engaged to lead home as 'a bear,' through 'Venice, Vienna, Saxony, Ber-

lin, and so by the Spaw, and then through Holland to England.' This plan could not have been carried out; for, as it will be seen, he came home by the regular Lyons route.

Altogether, Mr Sterne enjoyed his travels; and though he met with a few discomforts and some trifling annoyances, such as 'the pistol tinder-box, which was, moreover, filched from me at Sienna, and twice that I payéd five pauls for two hard eggs, once at Ruddi Coffini, and a second time at Capua;' still, 'a journey through France and Italy, *provided a man keeps his temper all the way*, is not so bad a thing as *some people would have you believe.*' A sly stroke at the sour chronicle of Doctor Smollett. It had been well for that famous humorist if he had got off cheaply with this quiet thrust; but Mr Sterne was preparing to find room for him in the *Sentimental Journey*, and had devised for him the odious sobriquet of Smelfungus. Excellent is the philosophy of travel given as the result of experience. ''Tis nonsense to imagine they will lend you their voitures to be shaken to pieces for nothing; and unless you pay twelve sous for greasing your wheels, how should the poor peasant get butter to his bread? We

really expect too much; and for a livre or two above par for your supper and bed, who would embroil their philosophy for it. For Heaven's sake pay it!' Valuable and healthful counsel, even in these times, when the 'voitures' have been finally shaken to pieces; and there is no greater trial of temper, than a customs examination and a train lost by a few seconds.

Coming up through France he had laid out a plan to leave his regular course, for the long-promised pleasure of seeing his wife and girl. But he was to have infinite trouble in finding them. They had been changing their place of abode again and again, and he had literally to track them through half-a-dozen towns, receiving news of them at each. He found them at the end, in *Franche Comté*. The meeting after this long absence seems to have been most affectionate. 'Poor woman!' said Mr Sterne, describing it, 'she was very cordial, etc.' (how Shandean are these 'etc.'s'). With his daughter he was delighted, and found her 'improved in everything he wished her.' But Mrs Sterne, with her old indiscretion, would not return to England as yet, and was most anxious to stay another year or so. But she remarked a great change in him, and

was struck with his look of ill-health, and in fact he left her 'most melancholy on that account.'

The point was left open, and Mr Sterne again struck into the regular road that led up to Paris. But at Dijon he was tempted to turn aside to 'a delicious château,' belonging to a French Marquis of his acquaintance, which was at that time full of agreeable company, including seven witty and handsome French ladies. In which pleasant encampment he remained 'patriarching it' for a full week. He had not enjoyed himself so much for long. 'This is a delicious part of the world: most celestial weather, and we lie all day without damps upon the grass.' He was, besides, 'inspired twice a-day (for her ladyship is not stingy of her wine) with the best Burgundy that grows upon the mountains which terminate our land here.'* No wonder with such associations that he felt 'unaccountably well, and most accountably nonsensical, and full of boisterous spirits,' and felt an irrepressible longing to gallop away at once with his pen. 'In faith,' he says, exuber-

*This sketch recalls a charming picture, extracted by Leigh Hunt from Colonel Pinkney's *Travels in France*.

antly, writing from this charming plaisaunce, 'I think I shall die with it in my hand. But I shall live these ten years, my Antony.' A delusive hope, for already his sands were being counted, and the poor gay Shandean had but a year and ten months of life before him.

He tore himself from the château and the seven handsome ladies, intending to post it night and day to Paris; and tarried there only long enough to 'wind himself up' to roll on to Calais. He had made a covenant with his Cousin Antony to be home in time to sup with him at Crazy Castle on the King's birthday, and he actually got to Yorkshire before that solemnity came round.

THE LAST SERMON

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST SERMON*

HE had not been home a fortnight, when he was writing to Paris, to make faithful provision for his wife and daughter. They were at Marseilles, and about to move to Châlons, and Mrs Sterne had fallen sick. He sent them fifty pounds through Mr Panchaud. 'I have,' he writes to him, 'such entire confidence in my wife that she spends as little as she can, *tho' she is confined to no particular sum;* her expenses will not exceed three hundred pounds a year, unless by ill-health or a journey, *and I am very willing she should have it;* and you may rely, in case she should draw for fifty or a hundred pounds extraordinary, that it and every

*[This sermon, which may have been Sterne's last appearance in the cathedral pulpit, was preached on Sunday, August 24, 1766. For details of the brilliant occasion, see *The St James Chronicle* for August 26-28, 1766. In the Introduction, attention has already been called to some inaccuracies in the account given by Mr Fitzgerald.]

demand shall be punctually paid, and with proper thanks; and for this the whole Shandean family are ready to stand security.'

Not long after he wrote again, afraid that the banker should not have complied with his wishes.* He was getting uneasy, too, about Mrs Sterne's state of health, and was actually negotiating a journey to Paris as 'bear leader,' to a young nobleman (an odious office, to which he had special aversion), in order that he might with economy fly over to Avignon. A little later he wrote again, adding thirty guineas more to his original order, for Mrs Sterne was something worse. 'Do write to her,' he presses on his banker. The illness was, however, not serious for the present, and in a few weeks she grew better.

But this autumn there came a little provincial excitement to make an agreeable break in his solitude. The young King of Denmark was making a progress through England, and was being received everywhere, as the public journals put it, with 'great demon-

* For one of Mr Sterne's reputed laxity in business matters, he seems to have balanced accounts with his Paris banker with wonderful exactness. He was always a little in advance, but only a little, and was sending over drafts to settle his account with great regularity.

strations of joy.' He was now coming to York. The great races were to be on the eighteenth of August, and he had promised to be present.

That festival was long remembered in York, where the gathering was considered the grandest ever known. Nearly seven hundred persons of distinction subscribed to the ball at the Assembly Rooms. A splendid retinue of nobility escorted the Duke of York. Sunday intervened, and the august party attended service in the Cathedral, where the Danish King was placed in state on the Archbishop's throne. There was a sermon — and that sermon was preached by certainly the most famous preacher of the province — the Reverend Mr Sterne. He had taken his leave of preaching for ever, as he fancied; but on such an occasion he could scarcely resist. 'An excellent discourse,' said the London papers.

He was already at his ninth — and what proved to be the last — volume of *Tristram;* and had laid out that he would write but one that year. His heart was on a new book, on a new plan — 'a work of four volumes' — for such was the extent he medi-

tated for his *Sentimental Journey.* He grew tired of Tristram and his adventures. At the same time, he was writing to his friends his philosophical refrain about happiness being independent of situation, and of each man finding it within himself. But this, it is to be feared, was what he himself would call 'no bad rant:' for no one leaned so little on himself, or changed his stage so often in search of comfort, as Yorick.

He worked very hard all the winter at his book, shut up in his solitary parsonage, varying the monotony by a stray letter, written and received. Sometimes a 'Crazy-ite,' one of the Stevenson set, would pass by and look in, and him he would charge with a letter for the Castellan. He considered him 'as a bank-note in a corner drawer of my bureau. I know it is there — (I wish I did!).' The old Stillington Common cropped up again, and harassed him with what he hated — business: and every moment he had before him the prospect of a rough road and wintry journey through French ice and snows down to Marseilles, where his sick wife was lying.

She, however, grew better; and they de-

termined with the new year to move from Marseilles to a romantic spot near Avignon, a charming place, actually beside the fountain of Vaucluse. Nothing more delightful could be conceived; and it makes a companion picture to the Toulouse mansion. Mr Sterne could appreciate the associations of Petrarch and Laura, and envied their residence. It was a marvel of cheapness — seven rooms *en suite*, 'half furnished with tapestry, half with blue taffety; the permission to fish and have game; so many partridges a week, etc.; and the price? — guess! sixteen guineas a year!' Well might Mr Sterne say, 'There's for you, Panchaud!'

They were established there by the end of February; and their kind paymaster at home had taken care they should have a hundred louis to enable them to leave Marseilles with credit as soon as the Carnival was over.

At this new residence they made a pleasant acquaintance in the Abbé de Sade, an accomplished scholar, who had written a life of Petrarch, and who was correcting a French translation of Mr Sterne's *Sermon*, made by Miss Lydia Sterne. There they

made acquaintances, and found friends — 'a Marquis,' among others, who was rude to the Abbé de Sade. But it is clear these two ladies had scarcely discretion enough to keep them from embarrassment in a foreign country. The proposals made so frequently for Miss Lydia's hand, show certain attractions in her; but their fruitless issue in all cases show a want of judgment in Mrs Sterne as to the quality of the suitors she encouraged for her daughter.

Very delightful, as was remarked before, were Mr Sterne's letters to his daughter at this period — so affectionate, so playful, and so considerate: he seems to alter his tone and style, to become, as it were, her playfellow: he bids her open her heart to him; 'to write soon, and write naturally, and then you will write well.' She breaks her guitar; and he writes off to Paris: 'My daughter begs a present of me, and you know I can deny her nothing. It' — by a characteristic omission, he leaves out the name of the article he wants — 'it must be strung with catgut, and of five cords.' He sends Mrs Sterne a fashionable medicine, then largely advertised, 'Huxham's Tincture

of Bark,' a good remedy for the ague. These are not tokens of tremendous weight and significance; yet there is sometimes more delicacy and affection accompanying a small present, and its associations, than in the crude bulk of more costly and substantial tokens. Absence had not sunk him into laziness or indifference.

As usual, Christmas again found him in London; and with the arrival of Mr Sterne came up, too, the ninth *Shandy*. He now chose out new lodgings, to which he always came for the future, at number 41 Old Bond Street, a very fashionable quarter; on the west side was a bag-wig maker's and on the first floor of the bag-wig maker's, were Mr Sterne's rooms. As we now walk down that old-fashioned thoroughfare, we may lift our eyes to Mr Sterne's windows, but the bag-wig maker has passed away with the bag-wigs he made; a cheesemonger took his place in our time, and finally a firm of picture dealers. Messrs Agnew have erected a handsome gallery on the site.

Tristram had now passed through the press, and on the 29th of January, 1767, the customary advertisement appeared. But

a note appended showed how keenly relished had been the new-born loves of Captain Shandy. '*** This volume contains the amours of my Uncle Toby.' There was but one volume, instead of the favourite number, two; and in that one volume, there was but half the customary number of pages. The price was only two shillings, 'sewed.' But a more curious interest attaches to the little volume, for it was the last of the *Shandy* series, and, begun abruptly, it stopped short as abruptly, and remains now, like his other works, a mere fragment. It came out prefaced by a strange dedication. Six years before he had dedicated his first *Tristram* instalment to Mr Pitt, the great patriot Minister. Mr Pitt was now Lord Chatham, and to this nobleman he inscribed the last portion. It is in a vein of satirical compliment.* 'My opinion of Lord —— is neither better nor worse than it was of Mr ——. Honours, like impressions upon coin, may give an ideal and local value to a bit

* He has disguised the names under stars. Lord ******* has the right number, but Mr * * * only three, a curious illustration of Mr Sterne's failing in spelling.

of base metal, but not to gold and silver'—a curious anticipation of the often-quoted lines of Burns'—'The guinea stamp,' etc. It is scarcely in good taste; and if he had the popular aim of dedication in those times in view, it was hardly calculated to rouse the dormant patronage of the great minister.

More *Sermons* too were ready, and were announced on Saturday, January the eighteenth.* The old title-page device was still kept up. They were the composition of 'Mr Yorick,' but were published by the 'Rev. Mr Sterne.' The price was five shillings, 'sewed;' † and '***' The nobility and gentry who have honoured Mr Sterne with their subscriptions,' were requested to send for their copies to the publishers. The author spoke boastfully in his letters of that list of 'the nobility and gentry,' but scarcely with exaggeration. It was a dazzling show, such as must have made many a garreteer's heart burn with envy. There was to be seen in it

* [January 18, 1766, *not* 1767.]

† 'Boards' and 'cloth' being as yet unknown, every book came out either in paper covers, like French books, or 'whole bound in calf.' Immediate binding became a necessity. Those who love, like Mr Shandy, to *bouquiner* among the stalls, will have remarked the legion of little books of this period, all in the one monotonous livery of a brown old calf.

every name in the Titled Calendar — dukes, earls, peers in profusion, jostling one another in a disorderly crowd. There was to be seen a cloud of baronets, and a file of names of all that was brilliant and literary. D'Olbach, Crebillon, Diderot, and all his French friends mustered round him thickly; that now half-French Hume, whom he threatened to call deist if he did not subscribe; and gentlemen of the army. Ladies, such as 'Mrs Grosvenor and Miss Eliza Grosvenor,' were very strong in numbers. On the roll we read the names of Mr Beauclerk, Mr Ed. Montagu (Lady Mary's son), Mr Reynolds, of Leicester Fields (curiously the only one whose address is given), many Pitts, Thomas Townshend, 'Walpole, Esquire,' and, walking last in the procession, the sardonic-looking name, M. de Voltaire. (How did he secure him?) Gentlemen of the gown mustered in crowds; and among them Mr Sterne saw the name of the Rev. Dr Leigh, who was vicar of Halifax when he was at the Free School. Here was grave warning and serious reproof from a moral age.

From Bond Street he wrote to Panchaud, advising him of a hundred guineas paid into

Mr Selwin's hands for the use of Mrs Sterne.* He was full of his book, and anxious that the banker should get him 'the honour of a few names of men of science and fashion. 'Tis subscribed for at a great rate.' A fortnight later he wrote again, anxious that Mrs Sterne should have her hundred pounds. They had just written over an agreeable piece of news. A Marseilles gentleman, worth twenty thousand livres a year, 'and much at his ease,' had 'offered' for Miss Sterne; and Mr Sterne wrote gaily to his friends that he supposed 'Mademoiselle, with Madame ma Femme, will negotiate the affair.' Nothing more, however, was heard of the French monsieur who was so 'very much at his ease.' Most likely he fancied Miss Sterne to be equally very much at her ease; and so, like many others of the lady's proposals, it came to nothing. Mr Sterne, when details were forwarded to him, interpreted his attentions with the eyes of a man of the world. 'As to Mr ——,' he wrote, in a postscript to Miss

* This letter, dated Feb. 28, and not published, is curiously like one in the printed collection,—indeed is word for word in many sentences. In this last letter he calls Mr Selwin 'Mr Selvey,' and talks of 'Merseilles.' He also adds, how he expected to make a thousand guineas of his new book. Most likely he thought the first had miscarried.

Lydia, 'by your description he is a fat fool; I beg you will not give up your time to such a being.'

Yet he could write, with a charming gaiety, pleasant light letters down to the ladies at Newburgh; letters addressed, indeed, to his friend, Lord Fauconberg, but stored with London gossip for their amusement. These little 'gazettes' unfold the old story of the dinners with the 'Duke of York's people,' the concerts, and the first of Mrs Cornely's Soho assemblies. He had also found his way to the acquaintance of the wild Lord March, afterwards 'old Q.' These characteristic epistles will be welcome at full length.*

'LONDON, *Friday.*

'MY LORD, — When we got up yesterday morning, the streets were 4 inches deep in snow — it has set in now with the most intense cold. I could scarse lay in bed for it, and this morning more snow again. Tho' the roads after all are extreamly good near town, and, I suppose, every where else, the snow has been very deep in Kent.

'No news. I dined yesterday with Lord

* The originals are at Newburgh, and I was allowed to use them by the kindness of Sir George Wombwell.

Marsh and a large company of the duke of York's people, etc., and came away just as wise as I went. The King at Cimon the new opera last night — nobody at Covent Garden but the citizens' children and apprentices. The Duke of York was to have had a play house of his own, and had studied his part in the Fair Penitent, and made Garrick act it twice on purpose to profit by it; but the King, 'tis said, has desired the Duke to give up the part and the project with it.

☞ '(all this is for the Ladies) to whom, w^th^ all comp^s^ to the party at Quadrille and Lady Catherine.

'I am, my Lord,

'Y^r^ most unworthy Gazetteere that ever wrote,

'but most faithfully y^r^ ever obliged,

'L. STERNE.'

'BOND STREET, *Jan.* 16*th*, 1767.

'MY LORD, — There is a dead stagnation of everything, and scarse any talk but about the damages done over the Kingdom by this cruel storm; it began yesterday morning to thaw gently, and has continued going on so till now. I hope it will all get away after the same manner. It was so intensely cold on Sunday,

that there were few either at the church or court, but last night it thaw'd; the concert at Soho top full — and was (this is for the ladies) the best assembly and the best concert I ever had the honour to be at. Lady Anne had the goodness to challenge me, or I had not known her, she was so prudently muffled up; Lord Bellasyse, I never saw him look so well; Lady Bellasyse recovers *à marvielle* — and y^r^ little niece I believe grows like flax.

'We had reports yesterday that the York stage coach w^th^ 14 people in and about it, were drown'd by mistaking a bridge — it was contradicted at night — as are half the morning reports in town.

'The *School for Guardians* (wrote by Murphy) scarse got thro' the 1st night — 'tis a most miserable affair — Garrick's Cimon fills his house brim full every night.

'The streets are dirtier than in the town of Coxwould — for they are up to the knees, except on the *trottoire*.

'I beg my best comp^s^, my Lord, to Mrs Bellasyse the Ladies ——, and to S^r^ Bryan Stapleton, and am

'With unfeigned attachm^ts^, y^r^ l^d^p's faithful, L. STERNE.'

The thoughtless clergyman was, however, to be troubled with many rude correctives; though he affected to 'laugh loudly' at all such protests, he still felt them secretly. To the end of his life he was always spoken of with a coarse freedom in the public journals. It has been mentioned how one of the curious effects of the popularity of *Tristram* was, that it should have become a young ladies' book, and been hidden away in young ladies' pockets; and this feature grew so developed as to be noticed in many contemporary papers and magazines. But it was to receive a yet more curious confirmation. On the morning of Monday, March the 30th, there appeared in the *Public Ledger* a letter, signed 'Davus,' full of the old scandal and the old complaints; and on the same day some well-meaning persons, struck by the justness of these strictures, sent down from London an anonymous letter, addressed to Mr Sterne's archbishop. With all his failings, he might contend against, or, at least, affect to despise, open attack; but it was hard to struggle against assailants in the dark. Happily it seems to have met with the reception such

unaccredited strokes should always meet; for it does not appear to have injured him with his superiors.*

'MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE:—

'Several well wishers to your Grace, and to religion and the cause of virtue, modesty, and decency, think it a duty incumbent on them, consistently with that regard they have for them, as well as order and right conduct, to refer your Grace to a letter, signed *Davus*, in the *Public Ledger* of this day, very justly, as they humbly think, animadverting on the scandal they have long taken and oftener conceived at the works of *Tristram Shandy* as written by a clergyman, and a dignified one, uncensured by his superiors.' They went on to say that they 'harboured no peek' against him and were certain that his Grace, 'as this gentleman was within his province to censure,' would use all proper means '*as shall deter this wanton scandal to his cloth, from proceeding in this lewd, ludicrous manner, as he has long done, to the shame and disgrace of his sacred order and the detriment of society; of which surely*

* This letter was found among the Archbishop's papers.

many fathers and mothers can testify, whose daughters have not thereby been mended, but most probably corrupted, of which there may be given instances.

'MONDAY *Mar.* 30, 1767.'

This grave and striking indictment seems exactly to express the right view of our hero's work, and in a rough way shows how discreditable was the *rôle* he had taken up. From encouragement and long striving to 'spice' his writing with grossness, it is clear he had become quite insensible to the claims of decency, and indifferent as to what was thought of him. There are some letters of his written to a 'Dear H——' or Hannah, as I find in the original — written in a too free style, which shows how demoralised he had become, if not quite hardened. In another he writes, — 'Now be a good dear girl, Hannah, and give these to Fanny, and Fanny will give that wh belongs to her sister, herself, and when I see you I'll give you a kiss. Theres for you! But I have something else for you which I am fabricating at a great rate, and that is my journey, which shall make you cry as much as ever

it made me laugh, or I'll give up the business of sentimental writing and write to the body — that is Hannah! — what I am doing in writing to you, but you are a *good body*, and that's worth half a score *mean souls*. Upon mine, I am y^rs., L. SHANDY.'

YORICK AND ELIZA

CHAPTER IX

YORICK AND ELIZA

THE charge that his writings had done injury to the young was often repeated.

It is a sad business altogether,* and it must be said that there is something degrading to our literature, and almost unique, to find a writer, who has to earn his wage by pandering to the grosser tastes of his time. At the same time there are signs that, with the decay of his health, he was beginning to have uneasiness and compunctions as to his unworthy office. Unluckily, while making this plea for him, we find him engaged in one of his most sentimental amours, over which the sober must shake

* It is stranger to find in the sermon read by Trim a description of his own state, — 'A man shall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles, exceptionable in his conduct to the world,' etc., etc. 'Surely you must think conscience must lead such a man a troubled life. Alas! conscience had something else to do all this time than break in upon him. . . . This dumb god was either talking or pursuing, or was in a journey, or peradventure he slept and could not be awoke.'

their heads and the judicious grieve. All the world knows 'Yorick's letters to Eliza,' and the French, in particular, have taken a special interest in this episode, which is much 'in their line.' It is a curious and not uninteresting episode, and I shall now give complete account of the transaction, the first that has yet been presented.

In Bristol Cathedral is to be seen a graceful monument, consisting of two classical figures bending over a shield, one bearing a torch, the other a dove. This is a tribute to the memory of Mrs Elizabeth Draper, Yorick's 'Eliza,' and Sterne's friend, 'in whom,' it records, 'genius and benevolence were united.' 'She died Aug. 3d, 1778, aged 35.' 'Yorick's letters to Eliza' enjoyed enormous popularity in their day, and are still relished abroad. It was in the year 1766 that he became acquainted with this lady, 'by accident' we are told. He was then a rather elderly Lothario of fifty-six, and with considerable art he took care to assume a sort of paternal or clerical tone in keeping with his time of life. She had been born in the country of Anjinga, the farthest English settlement on the Malabar coast, which

prompted Raynal's extraordinary burst of rapture about the place in his *History of the Indies*. When treating of the English settlements on the coast of Malabar he suddenly launched out into this super-French piece of bombast: 'Territory of Anjinga, you are nothing; but you have given birth to Eliza! One day these commercial establishments founded by Europeans on the coast of Asia will exist no more. The grass will cover them, or the avenged Indian will have built over their ruins; but if my writings have any duration, the name of Anjinga will remain in the memory of men. Those who shall read my works, those whom the winds shall waft to thy shores, will say, "It is there that Eliza Draper was born;" and if there is a Briton among them, he will hasten to add with pride, "and she was born of English parents." . . . From the height of the heavens, thy first and last country, receive, Eliza, my oath — I swear never to write a line by which the world shall not recognise thy friend.'

Yet the object of this inflated language was, after all, an average heroine, whose admirers, oddly enough, seem limited to two

disorderly clerics, one of whom was virtually unfrocked, and the other pronounced by a bishop to be 'an irrevocable scoundrel.' According to the candid description of her admirer, she seems to have been a rather ordinary-looking person, but there was a secret charm about her which it required an intimate friendship to develop. 'When I first saw you,' he says, 'I beheld you as an object of compassion, and a very plain woman. The mode of your dress disfigured you — but nothing now could render you such but the being solicitous to make yourself admired as a handsome one. You are not handsome, Eliza, nor is yours a face that will please the tenth part of your beholders. But you are something more; for I scruple not to tell you, I never saw so intelligent, so animated, so good a countenance. A something in your voice and eyes you possess in a degree more persuasive than any woman I ever saw, read, or heard of; but it is that bewitching sort of nameless excellence that *men of nice sensibility alone* can be touched with.'

Mr Sterne was deeply skilled in the arts of gaining the female heart, and this adroitly-

calculated depreciation was likely to be more acceptable than an elaborate compliment. Mr James Forbes, who wrote four portly tomes of Eastern travel, met her in society at Bombay, and was impressed by her 'refined taste and elegant accomplishments, which required no panegyric from his pen.' Mr Draper, her husband, we are told, was 'much respected in that quarter of the globe.' He was Second Commissioner at Bombay, and later became Chief at Surat. In the voluminous Hastings' correspondence we find him offering his compliments and services to that great man, announcing also to him his recall to Bombay. Mr Sterne insinuates that he was a penurious person, anxious for the wife's return on account of the expense he was put to. It might be thought that he was an elderly or old man, for his signature to the letters is of a singularly tottering and infirm character, as though written by one suffering from paralysis. But the fact is he was only fifteen years older than she.

The Indian lady had Indian friends in London, who lived in Gerrard Street. These were Commodore James and his wife; the former an officer of some distinction, who

had served in many adventurous expeditions on the Indian coast, where sailors had to be as much soldiers as sailors; and whose deeds are fully described by the historian, Orme. In that work, which at that time was just published, the name of Commodore James occurs frequently. They seem to have been kind, excellent, hospitable persons, and warm friends both of Mr Sterne and of Mrs Draper; and at their house in Gerrard Street, it seems more than probable, Yorick first met Eliza. He was to become later Sir William James, and chairman of the East India Company; and the only little fact of his London life that I can discover, shows him befriending the unfortunate Colonel Frederick, who was son to the famous adventurer Theodore, King of Corsica, and calling a private meeting of friends at Gerrard Street, to raise a subscription for his benefit. He seems to have been a brave soldier and a kindly friend.

As usual, and following out his principle of ever having some Dulcinea in his head, Mr Sterne gave full reins to his sentimental passion. As with the Paris lady, he 'deliciously cantered away with it, always upon my haunches along the street.' He followed it

out in many tender phases, with his usual thoughtless, reckless fashion. The public, the ostentatious way in which he brought this grand passion and its incidents before all his friends — before the sober and correct, as well as the more free — and even before the public, shows plainly that he considered himself a privileged sentimentalist. More questionable affairs are not thrust thus into the light of day. By-and-by Mr Sterne was inviting all the world to listen to the sorrows of his sentimental passion. As it was, London society began to talk; and an officious but well-meaning person, flush of English news, passing by Marseilles, where were Mrs Sterne and her daughter, had the cruelty and bad taste to inform them of the new scandal that was then amusing London.

The sick lady had the spirit to reply 'that she wished not to be informed, and urged that he would drop the subject.' The young girl herself wrote to her father how uneasy her mother was on the subject. The subject was indeed unsuitable for one of her years. But this was one of the painful complications into which her father's follies led him. He wrote back to her that he honoured Mrs Sterne for

her answer; and then — to his own child — entered on a sort of justification of himself. 'Tis true I have a friendship for her; but not to infatuation. — I believe I have judgment enough to discern hers and every woman's "faults."' He then heartily wishes 'he had her with him to introduce her to his friends, the James's,' whose portraits he sketches for her. He 'is as worthy a man as I ever met. He possesses every manly virtue — honour and bravery are his characteristics, which have distinguished him nobly in several instances.' Mrs James 'is the most amiable and gentlest of beings,' and 'of so sweet a disposition that she is too good for the world. Just God!' adds Mr Sterne, 'if *all were like her!* Heaven, my Lydia, for some wise purpose, has created different beings.' An allusion there is no mistaking.

Mrs James had probably introduced him to their *protégée*. These worthy people do not appear to have seen any harm in this behaviour, or at least did not interfere, probably accepting the clergyman's interest as semi-paternal or semi-religious. But the affair was beginning to be talked of, and certain friends in the City, in the absent Draper's

interest, remonstrated with 'the Brahmine' — Mr Sterne's pet name for her — on her indiscretion. This threw her admirer into a fury. His hatred to these people was indeed extraordinary. He returned again and again to them. 'I would not give ninepence,' he said angrily, 'for the picture of you they have got executed; it is that of a conceited, made-up coquette. Your eyes and the shape of your face, the latter the most perfect oval I ever saw, which are perfections that must strike the most indifferent judge, because they are equal to any of God's works in a similar way, and finer than any I beheld in all my travels — are manifestly inspired by *the affected leer of the one and strange appearance of the other.*'

This combination of animosity and flattery is amusing, and calculated to have telling effect on the mind of a foolish or impressionable heroine. All this, as he confessed later, was an entire fiction; he had invented the whole story because 'they used their endeavours with her to break off her friendship with me, for reasons I will not write, but tell you.' Mrs James knew nothing of their 'baseness.' The reasons given by him

for this advice to break off her intimacy with them might certainly have been given by Tartuffe. 'Forgive my zeal, dear girl, and allow me right, which arises only out of that fund of affection I have, and shall preserve for thee to the hour of my death. I think you a very deserving woman, and that you want nothing but firmness, and a better opinion of yourself, to be the best female character I know.' But his philanthropic efforts did not succeed, and the Brahmine declined to give up her friends.

Presently her health seemed to grow worse, and Daniel Draper was insisting on her returning to him. This was not from any rumours having reached him — there was not time for that, the intimacy having only lasted a few months. She resolved to set off, prepared for the voyage, on the eve of which Mr Sterne seems to have begun that characteristic correspondence later known as that of 'Yorick and Eliza.' These letters were sent to her up to the time of the sailing, and they are certainly original and characteristic.

He used to write to her at all seasons. On returning from a dinner-party, the artful Lothario, adroitly touching every note of

the sympathetic gamut so as to excite an interest in himself, would write thus: 'Best of all good girls, the sufferings I sustained last night on account of thine, Eliza, are beyond my powers. Thou hast been bowed down, my child, with every burden that sorrow of heart and pain of body could inflict on a poor being. Fear nothing, my dear; hope everything; and the balm of this passion will shed its influence on thy health, and make thee enjoy a spring of youth and cheerfulness, more than thou hast hardly yet tasted.'

All these evils, of course, were awaiting her on her arrival at Bombay; but the 'balm of this passion' (for him, the Reverend Laurence) was to be her solace. He, indeed, rarely omits a judicious stroke at Daniel Draper, Esquire. 'Trust my declaration, Eliza, that thy husband (*if he is the good feeling man I wish him*) will press thee to him with more honest warmth and affection than he would be able to do in *the best bloom* of thy beauty — and so he ought. I pity him — he must have strange feelings if he knows not the value of such a creature as thou art.'

At last the moment came for separation,

and the outward-bound Indiaman was about to sail from Deal. Mr Sterne took great pains in looking after some little comforts for the voyage, screws for her cabin, etc.; writing also to the pilot, Abraham Walker.

She was really ill, but prepared at once for her voyage. She was to leave her children behind, and her passage was taken in the *Earl of Chatham*, which was to sail about the beginning of April. The day of departure came at last, and she had to go down to Deal, off which coast the vessel was lying, to wait until the signal for embarkation should be given. Mr Sterne then began to write those famous love-letters which have been translated into nearly every European language; and continued to write them until the *Earl of Chatham* weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

He wrote a curious letter to his daughter just after his departure which offers an odd jumble of feelings:

'BOND STREET, *April* 9, 1767.

'This letter, my dear Lydia, will distress thy good heart, for from the beginning thou wilt perceive no entertaining strokes of hu-

mour in it — I cannot be chearful when a thousand melancholy ideas surround me — I have met with a loss of near fifty pounds, which I was taken in for in an extraordinary manner — but what is that loss in comparison of one I may experience? ——— Friendship is the balm and cordial of life, and without it, 'tis a heavy load not worth sustaining. — I am unhappy — thy mother and thyself at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? — For God's sake persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation — and whilst she lives in one country, and I in another, many people will suppose it proceeds from choice — besides I want thee near me, thou child and darling of my heart! — I am in a melancholy mood, and my Lydia's eyes will smart with weeping when I tell her the cause that now affects me. — I am apprehensive the dear friend I mentioned in my last letter is going into a decline — I was with her two days ago, and I never beheld a being so altered — she has a tender frame, and looks like a drooping lily, for the roses are fled from her cheeks — I can never see or talk to this incomparable woman without bursting

into tears—— I have a thousand obligations to her, and I owe her more than her whole sex, if not all the world put together. — She has a delicacy in her way of thinking that few possess — our conversations are of the most interesting nature, and she talks to me of quitting this world with more composure than others think of living in it. — I have wrote an epitaph, of which I send thee a copy. — 'Tis expressive of her modest worth — but may heav'n restore her! and may she live to write mine.

'Columns, and labour'd urns but vainly shew,
An idle scene of decorated woe.
The sweet companion, and the friend sincere,
Need no mechanic help to force the tear.
In heart-felt numbers, never meant to shine,
'Twill flow eternal o'er a hearse like thine;
'Twill flow, whilst gentle goodness has one *friend*,
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.'

Mrs Draper, was now writing details about the ship and her fellow-passengers. There was a Miss Light going with her, — a lady who afterwards married 'George Stratton, Esquire.' She was taking out her pianoforte and a guitar; and Mr Sterne, a known musician himself, went to Zumpe's, a maker of the period, and obtained some directions from

him in reference to the tuning of both instruments. Down at York, the Rev. Mr Mason had a 'Zumpe' also, which he lent to Gray, and the high notes of which were 'somewhat dry and sticky.' This instrument Mr Sterne must have seen. He got her a hammer and pliers to twist her wire with, and 'may every one of them, my dear, vibrate sweet comfort to thy hopes.' He also got her 'ten handsome brass screws to hang your necessaries upon.' There were twelve originally, but he stole a couple from 'you to put up in my own cabin at Coxwould. I shall never hang or take my hat off one of them but I shall think of you.' He also wrote 'Mr Abraham Walker, pilot at Deal,' to receive all those articles on the arrival of the Deal machine, and bid him look out for a serviceable arm-chair in that town, and send it on board.

He continues to write steadily every day — sometimes in a strain of simplicity that provokes a smile, and suggests the mixture of sentiment and 'bread and butter' in Goethe's 'Charlotte.' Thus he dwells at length on the painting of her cabin. 'O! I grieve for your cabin; and fresh painting will be enough to

destroy every nerve about thee. Take care of yourself, my dear girl, and sleep not in it too soon; 'twill be enough to give you a stroke of epilepsy.' And later he asks, 'Why may not clean washing and rubbing do?'

He promised to write every post until she finally set sail. He bids her put all his letters 'into some order.' The first eight or nine were numbered,* but the rest she will be able to arrange 'by the day or hour which, *I hope*, I have generally prefixed.'

Among the passengers, too, was 'a young soldier,' whom Mrs Draper described as 'susceptible of tender impressions.' Mr Sterne would seem to have been uneasy on the score of this 'young soldier,' and was disturbed by the way his approaches were received: though he admits 'there was no shutting the door against him either in politeness or humanity.' In a sort of apologetic fashion, Eliza had hinted that 'before Miss Light had sailed a fortnight, he will be in love with her.' 'But,' says Mr Sterne, 'five months with Eliza, and in the same room, and with an amorous son of Mars!' And

* There are only, properly speaking, four given previous to this letter, so a good many must have been lost.

then thinking of some negro character at the Theatre, adds, 'It *can no be Masser*.' 'But thy discretion, thy wisdom, thy honour — the spirit of thy honour.'

As the day for sailing drew near, Mrs Draper's illness increased, and her friends became alarmed. 'Mr Sterne pressed upon her the necessity of putting off her voyage; he was sure her husband, when he knew the true state of the case, could not object.' Her physician had indeed ordered her 'the pure southern air of France, or milder Naples;' so that the country to which she was hurrying was scarcely a suitable residence. But there was 'a Mr B——' standing by — an Indian, it is to be presumed — who seems to have drawn a not very encouraging picture of Mr Draper's impatience. Mr Sterne was afraid that this gentleman 'had exaggerated matters.' He did not like his face, 'it is absolutely killing; should evil befall thee, what will he have not to answer for.' He again pressed her to delay her journey. 'If thou art so very ill, put off all thoughts of returning to India this year; write to your husband; tell him the truth of your case. *If he is the generous, humane man you de-*

scribe him to be, he cannot but applaud your conduct.'

Speaking of her cabin friends, who he is afraid 'are only genteel by comparison with the contrasted crew with which she must behold them,' he returns again to the obnoxious City people. 'So was you know who, from the same fallacy that was put upon the judgment —— but I will not mortify you.' It has been assumed that this was a sneer at Daniel Draper, Esq., Councillor at Bombay, and who was so much respected 'in that quarter of the globe.'

Mr Thackeray was very bitter on this 'you know who,' also assuming that the reference was to her husband. It will be seen he was referring to the persons whom he had warned her against, and that 'strange infatuation' the 'fallacy that had been put upon her judgment' by the '——'s.'

Mr Sterne follows up his proposition:— ''Tis true *I am ninety-five in constitution*, and you but twenty-five — rather too great a disparity this! but what I want in youth I will make up in wit and good humour. Not Swift so loved his Stella, Scarron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa, as I will love and sing

thee, my wife elect. All these names, eminent as they were, shall give place to thine, Eliza.

'Tell me in answer to this that you approve and honour the proposal; and that you would (like the Spectator's mistress) have more joy in putting on an old man's slipper, than in associating with the gay, the voluptuous, and the young. Adieu! my Simplicia.

'Yours,

'TRISTRAM.'

At this moment of departure he threw out some mysterious promises and declarations. 'May poverty, distress, anguish, and shame be my portion if ever I give thee reason to repent the knowledge of me.' 'With this asservation, made in the presence of a just God, *I pray to Him that so it may speed with me as I deal candidly and honourably with thee.* Remember that, while I have life and power, whatever is mine you may style and think yours; *though sorry should I be if ever my friendship was put to the test thus,* for your own delicacy's sake' — an amusing qualification of generosity.

'I will live for thee and my Lydia, be rich

for the dear children of my heart, gain wisdom, gain fame and happiness, to share them with thee and her in my old age. Once for all, adieu; preserve thy life steadily, *pursue the ends we proposed*, and let nothing rob thee of those powers Heaven has given thee for thy well-being.' This seems to point to a future marriage. He had already jocularly hinted at it: 'Talking of widows,' he writes in a significant passage, 'if ever you are such, do not think of giving yourself to some wealthy nabob, because I design to marry you myself. My wife cannot live long, and I know not anyone I should like so well for her substitute as yourself.' Mrs Sterne was at the time in wretched health, and often within measurable distance of death so that this amiable suggestion was not merely Utopian.

'But, Eliza, if thou art so very ill, still put off all thoughts of returning to India this year. Write to your husband; tell him the truth of your case. *If he is the generous, humane man you describe him to be*, he cannot but applaud your conduct. I am creditably informed that his repugnance to your living in England arises only from the dread

which has entered his brain that thou mayest run him into debt beyond thy appointments, and that he must discharge them. That such a creature should be sacrificed for the paltry consideration of a few hundreds is too, too hard! Oh! my child, that I could with propriety indemnify him for every charge, even to the last mite, that thou hast been of to him! With joy would I give him my whole subsistence — nay, *sequester my livings*, and trust to the treasures Heaven has furnished my head with for a future subsistence.' This seems plain speaking enough. He would send for his wife and daughter, and they would all travel together on the Continent — '*fish on the banks of the Arno*,' which suggests Shelley who made exactly the same suggestion to his wife when he eloped with Mary Godwin. He would prescribe for her gratis, the rogue! 'You are not the first woman by many I have done so for with success!'

On Eliza's departure from London, Mr Sterne began to keep a journal of his doings in London, specially written to amuse her, and which he sent in portions to her. This was described as a vivacious and entertaining record, though it has never been published.

It was shown to Mr Thackeray by its possessor, Mr Gibbs, of Bath, who also showed it to the present writer. It was curious to hold in one's hand this substantial record, and look at the crowded and faded characters, written on huge sheets of foolscap. 'Upon the death of my father,' says Mr Gibbs, 'when I was eleven years old, a pile of old account books, letters, commonplace books, and other papers of no documentary value, was set aside as waste, and placed in a room where I used to play. I looked through the papers, and found the journal and letters. An early fondness for reading had made me acquainted with the well-known extracts from the writings of Sterne — *The Sword, The Monk, Le Fevre,* and a small book containing the "Letters of Yorick and Eliza" — and finding these names in the letters and book, I took all I could find and obtained permission to preserve them, and they have been in my possession ever since. How they came into the hands of my father, who was a great reader and had a large collection of old books, I never had any means of knowing.' He added the curious incident that it was discovered in a plate-warmer! The journal is

full of extraordinary incident, and from a hurried perusal, or snatch of perusal, it can be seen that it was written in Sterne's most characteristic manner.

'I have found,' Mr Gibbs writes to me, 'some difficulty in looking over Sterne's Journal in selecting a few extracts characteristic of him, for they are all characteristic, in the true Shandean style. I have copied the enclosed for you, preserving the original spelling, capital letters, and punctuation, and hope you will be pleased with the specimen. The lot was given me to cut up into spills to light candles with; but as I had read of Yorick and Eliza I looked over and kept these. The journal is a continuation of one begun when Eliza sailed for India, and of which the former portion was, it appears, sent to her. I wonder what became of it.'

It is strange that Thackeray should have made no use of it. Mr Gibbs is 'the gentleman of Bath' alluded to in the lectures on 'The Four Georges,' * and in a pleasing paper, marked by sound critical instinct and research,

* [*Not* in "The Four Georges," but in *A Roundabout Journey: Notes of a Week's Holiday* (Cornhill Magazine, November, 1760). Consult "Thackeray and the Journal" in the "Introduction" to *The Journal to Eliza* in this edition of Sterne.]

addressed to a literary society, he furnished some interesting extracts from this curious record. 'It consists,' he says, 'of assurances of his most fervent attachment; reiterated hopes for her return to England, and for the re-establishment of their health, and for their eventual union. With these are blended recitals of his frequent illnesses, the bursting of blood-vessels in the lungs, complaints of his wife's unceasing efforts to get all the money she could from him, with incidents of his journey and visits.' It shows that the luckless clergyman was really suffering from his hopeless passion, which he did not attempt to control. It begins: —

'*April* 18. — Wrote the last Farewell to Eliza by Mr Watts, who sails this Day for Bombay — inclosed her likewise th journl kept from th day we parted, to this — so from hence continue it till th time we meet again — Eliza does th same, so we shall have mutual testimonies to deliver hereafter to each other; That the Sun has not more constantly rose & set upon th earth than we have thought of, & remembered what is more cheering than life itself — Eternal Sunshine! Eliza, dark to me is all this world without thee & most

heavily will every hour pass over my head, till that is come which brings thee, dear Woman, back to Albion!

'Dined with Hall &c at the Brawn's Head. the whole Pandemonium assembled. — supp'd together at Hall's — worn out both in body & mind & paid a severe reckoning all the night.

'A day dedicated to Abstinence & Reflection — & what object will employ the greatest part of mine, full well does my Eliza know.

'*May* 22. — Left Bond St & London this morning.

'23. — Bear my journey badly. — ill & dispirited all th way — staid two days on the road at the A—Bishop of York's — shewd his Grace & his Lady & sisters your Portrait with a short but interesting story of my friendship for the Original — kindly nursed & honor'd by both — Arrived at my Thatched Cottage, the 28th of May.'

This archbishop was always friendly to him, and perhaps felt indulgently towards his follies, wishing perhaps to hold some control over him. It may be doubted, however, if he were as tolerant as he is represented in this little scene.

When he reached home he became a prey to the most overpowering dejection, and his state was truly pitiable. The mercurial Yorick, it will be seen, could only turn for relief to his favourite distraction, Eliza.

'*July* 12. — Am ill all day with th Impressions of yesterdy's accont — can neithr eat or drink or sit still & write or read. I walk like a disturbed spirit abt my garden calling up Heaven & thee to come to my succour. Coúldst thou but write one word to me it would be worth half the world to me — my friends write me millions — and evry one writes me to flee from my solitude and come to them — I obey th commands of my friend Hall who has sent over on purpose to fetch me — or else will come himself for me. So I set off to-morrow to take sanctuary in Crazy Castle — The Newspapers have sent me there alredy by putting in the following paragraph: —

'"We hear from Yorkshire that Skelton Castle is the present Rendezvous of the most brilliant wits of the age — the admired Author of *Tristram*, Mr Garrick, &c. being there; and Mr Coleman and many other men of wit & learning being every day expected."

'When I get there, which will be to-morrow night, my Eliza will hear from her Yorick.'

Mr Sterne now tells his Brahmine that he is expecting a visit from his wife and daughter, but, he complains bitterly that they were coming 'to fleece and pillage him.' A settlement was to be made on Mrs Sterne; an estate was to be sold, but they were to settle themselves in France.

'I'm truly acquiescent,' he adds, 'tho' I lose the contingency of surviving them — but 'tis no matter — I shall have enough — and a hundred or two hundred pounds for Eliza whenever She will honor me with putting her hand into my Purse.'

In the midst of his probably genuine grief at the loss of the Brahmine, he would condescend to some devices that cause a smile, and which he little dreamed would one day be revealed to the world. As we have hinted before, it turns out that some of the most impassioned portions of the letters sent to her were literal copies of his own love-letters addressed to Mrs Sterne thirty years before! It is said that the second Mrs Sheridan made a mortifying discovery of the same kind. The

following passage is the same in both, almost word for word:—

'I have just been eating my chicking, Sitting over it with tears a bitter sauce Eliza' ('my L.' in the first copy). 'When Molly (Fanny) spread the table cloth, my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass, &c.' After giving a 'thousand pensive penetrating looks' at the arm-chair (in the case of both the ladies), 'I laid down my knife and fork, took out my handkerchief, clap't it across my face, and wept like a child'—which is all verbatim with the old text. A female sympathising friend, Fanny, becomes Mrs James in the new version, who is represented as comforting and holding out hopes of a speedy union. This was not warrantable, and was only one of his many fictions as to Mrs James, who, he knew, had great influence with his inamorato. It was probably the discovery of this and other tricks, with perhaps the failure of his undertaking to leave her money in his will, that excited the bitter animosity of Mrs Draper, expressed after his death.

He was always attached to his daughter, and her visit seems to have had the effect

of softening him, even to her mother. He writes of her to Eliza: 'Never — has she vowed — will she give me another sorrowful or discontented hour. I have conquer'd her as I would every one else by humanity and generosity, & she leaves me more than half in love with me. She goes into the South of France, her health being insupportable in England and her age — *as she now confesses ten years more than I thought* — "an adroit stroke this" being on the edge of sixty. So God Bless & make the remainder of her life happy.'

The last words in this curious journal are: —

'What can I say — of what can I write, but the yearnings of a heart wasted with looking & wishing for your return.'

Mr Sterne's parting utterances were of what must be called rather a 'canting' sort.

'I probably shall never see you more; yet flatter myself you will sometimes think of me with pleasure, because you must be convinced I love you; *and so interest myself in your rectitude, that I had rather hear of any evil befalling you, than any want of reverence for yourself.*' He makes these assertions 'in the

presence of a just God.' 'May the God of kindness be kind to, and approve himself thy protector; and for thy daily comfort bear in mind this truth, that whatever measure of sorrow and dulness is thy portion, it will be repaid to thee in full measure of happiness by the Being thou hast wisely chosen for *thy eternal friend.*'

He concludes another of his letters in this way,—'What can I add more in the agitation of mind I am in, and within five minutes of the last postman's bell, *but to recommend thee to Heaven, and recommend myself to Him with thee,* in the same fervent ejaculation? That we may be happy and meet again—if not *in this world, in the next.*'

His last words to her were of the same character,—'Adieu! adieu! and with my adieus let me give thee one straight rule of conduct that thou hast *heard from my lips in a thousand forms, but I concentre it in one word:* Reverence thyself. I shall probably never see you more!' This he must have known was the probability, as indeed it proved the certainty. About this time he was being visited with forebodings of his own approaching end, and those fatal consumptive tokens

which had clung to him now for so many years, and were becoming more prominent every day, must have been significant warnings. Mrs Draper, too, was in miserable health, and scarcely seemed likely to survive the voyage. A voyage to India, too, at this date was a serious undertaking, very costly and tedious. A furlough to Europe was a rare pleasure, and the mere travelling home and out again in the lumbering Indiamen of the day, covered a serious span of human life. When therefore was Mrs Draper to think of visiting England and seeing Yorick again?

A plain, prosaic newspaper scrap — an extract from the shipping news of the day, contains the last scene in this little history: — '*Deal, April* 8, wind N.E., came down and sailed with his majesty's ship *Tweed, Merlin* sloop, and all the outward-bound, *Lord Chatham* East Indiaman, *Susannah Hays*, for Cadiz, and *Beaver Hamstrom*, for Venice.'

In the following year, when Sterne died in a lonely, miserable way at his Bond Street lodgings, and thus his complacent anticipations of outliving Daniel Draper, his own wife, and Mrs Draper herself were com-

pletely falsified, 'Eliza's' adventures began. She soon discovered, either from letters from England or from what she heard at Bombay, that the admirer of whom she had been the idol was, after all, only of clay. Writing to a friend, in 1772 — and I have seen this voluminous document of five or six folio sheets, a 'ship letter,'* in short — she makes this confession: 'I believed Sterne, implicitly I believed him; I had no motive to do otherwise than believe him just, generous, and unhappy — till his death gave me to know that he was tainted with *the vices of injustice, meanness, and folly.*' She was thinking of his solemn asseveration made so profanely 'in the presence of God.' And again: 'I was almost an idolator of his worth, while I fancied him the mild, generous, good Yorick we had so often thought him to be.'

What could have been the revelation which thus opened Eliza's eyes? Had she learned from the Jameses of that ingenious untruth — of his 'falsity' in reference to his city friends? Yet this would have been rather flattering to her vanity. Or had certain

* [This "ship letter" and other letters of Mrs Draper are given in the volume entitled *The Journal to Eliza.*]

communications been made to Mr Daniel Draper by the humorist — for a draft letter which Mr Gibbs found seems to show that Yorick, in his anxiety to propitiate the husband, was inclined to slight the wife? 'The draft remains unfinished,' Mr Gibbs says, 'and most probably the letter was never sent . . . it has been much altered, and left in some places without connection, and is (as nearly as it can be copied) as follows: —

'I own it, sir, that the writing a letter to a gentleman I have not the honour to be known to: a letter likewise upon no kind of business (in the ideas of the world) is a little out of the common course of things; but I'm so myself, and the impulse which makes me take up my pen is out of the common way too — for it arises from the honest pain I should feel in having so great esteem and friendship as I bear for Mrs Draper, if I did not wish to hope and extend it to Mr Draper also. I am really, dear sir, in love with your wife; but 'tis a love you would honour me for, for 'tis so like that I bear my own daughter, who is a good creature, that I scarce distinguish a

difference betwixt it — the moment I had would have been the last.

'I wish it had been in my power to have been of true use to Mrs Draper at this distance from her best protector. I have bestowed a great deal of pains (or rather, I should say, pleasure) upon her head — her heart needs none — and her head as little as any daughter of Eve's, and indeed less than any it has been my fate to converse with for some years. I wish I could make myself of any service to Mrs D. whilst she is in India, and I in the world — for worldly affairs I would be of none. I wish you, dear sir, many years' happiness. 'Tis a part of my litany to pray for her health and life. She is too good to be lost, and I would out of pure zeal take a pilgrimage to Mecca to seek a medicine.'

But it would seem more likely that Eliza's hostility was produced by some communication from the widow and daughter with whom she was presently at strife. The widow and neglected wife, a cross invalid, was likely to feel bitterly towards her. There was no love, certainly, lost between them.

Now there was a letter of her father's in

Lydia's possession in which he speaks of an accusation of Mrs Sterne's, that in case of his death he intended leaving his daughter to the care of Mrs Draper, a rumour he disposed of indignantly. 'She could know little of my feelings. No, my Lydia, 'tis a lady whose virtues I wish thee to imitate that I shall entrust my girl to — nor will she put my Lydia under the painful necessity to fly to India for protection.' Mrs Draper seems to have had some idea that he contemplated this arrangement by her offer to receive Lydia. However this may be, nothing is more likely than that the widow took care to tell her now this indiscreet and too candid opinion of her late husband in reference to his 'Brahmine.'

'Her violence of temper (indeed, I wish not to recriminate or be severe just now) and the hatefulness of her character, were strongly urged to me as the cause of his indifferent health, the whole of his misfortunes, and the evils that would probably shorten his life. The visit Mrs Sterne meditated some time antecedent to his death he most pathetically lamented, as an adventure that would wound his peace and greatly embarrass his circumstances — the former on account of the eye-

witness he should be to his child's affections having been alienated from him by the artful misrepresentations of her mother, under whose tutorage she had ever been, and the latter from the rapacity of her disposition, for "*well do I know*," says he, "*that the sole intent of her visit is to fleece me.* Had I money enough, I would buy off her journey, as I have done several others, but till my sentimental work is published I shall not have a single sou more than will indemnify people for my immediate expenses."'

We may interrupt her letter to quote one of Mr Sterne's to his daughter, which shows Yorick's duplicity: 'I am unhappy. Thy mother and thyself are at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? For God's sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation!'

Mrs Draper's letter goes on: 'The very first ship which left us afterwards' (*i. e.*, after Sterne's death) 'I wrote to Miss Sterne by, and with all the freedom which my intimacy with her father and his communications warranted. How could I with any kind of delicacy mention a person who was hateful to my

departed friend, when for the sake of that very friend I wished to confer a kindness on his daughter, and to enhance the value of it solicited her society and consent to share my prospects, as the highest favour which could be shown to myself? Indeed I knew not, but Mrs Sterne, from the description I had received of her, might be no more, or privately confined, if in being, owing to a malady which I have been told the violence of her temper subjects her to.' She, assisted by a Colonel Campbell, set on foot a subscription for the family at Bombay; and, as he was about to visit England, she recommended him as an eligible suitor for Miss Lydia's hand.

Some years passed by, and Mrs Draper was alarmed by other symptoms of hostility. As Yorick had written to her in a warm strain so had she responded, and she now discovered that her letters had not been destroyed, and were in the possession of Mrs Sterne. That these were of a compromising kind, and not likely to make her position comfortable in reference to Commissioner Draper, is evident from her genuine alarm, and the efforts she made to prevent their publication. As she wrote to the Jameses:

'To add to my regret for his loss, his widow had my letters in her power (I never entertained a good opinion of her), and meant to subject me to disgrace and inconvenience by the publication of them. You know not the contents of these letters, and it was natural for you to form the worst judgment of them when those who had seen 'em reported them unfavourably, and were disposed to dislike me on that account. My dear girl, had I not cause to feel humbled so circumstanced, and can you wonder at my sensations communicating themselves to my pen?

'I have heard some anecdotes extremely disadvantageous to the characters of the widow and daughter, and that from persons who said they had been personally acquainted with them both in France and England. . . . Some part of their intelligence corroborated what I had a thousand times heard from the lips of Yorick, almost invariably repeated. . . . The secret of my letters, being in her hands, had somehow become extremely public; it was noticed to me by almost every acquaintance I had in the English ships or at this settlement. This alarmed me, for at that time I had never communicated the

circumstance, and could not suspect you of acting by me in any manner which I would not have acted in by myself. One gentleman in particular told me that both you and I should be deceived if we had the least reliance on the honour or principles of Mrs Sterne, for that, when she had secured as much as she could for suppressing the correspondence, she was capable of selling it to a bookseller afterwards — by either refusing to restore it to you, or taking copies of it without our knowledge — and therefore he advised me, if I was averse to its publication, to take every means in my power of suppressing it. This influenced me to write to Becket and promise him a reward equal to his expectations if he would deliver the letters to you.'

The efforts of her kind friends appear to have succeeded, for the letters have never seen the light, though a sort of spurious catch-penny publication was impudently issued in her name, written, it is to be believed, by that notorious fabricator, Coombe.

It will be seen so far that Eliza was something of an *intriguante*, no doubt owing to her Eastern birth and associations.

The escapade that next followed in her career rather enfeebles the purely Platonic colour of the Yorick and Eliza episode; yet had he not enjoined her, 'Reverence thyself'?

Douglas, a 'writer' in Bombay, tells us that Mr Draper was a regular Indian, having been born in one of the Company's factories near Cape Commorin. He was appointed assistant paymaster. In 1762, he went with his wife to England.* The writer describes him as 'a very noble and good-humoured man, so dastardly forsaken in the elopement from Mazagon.' Daniel Draper after being promoted to be chief of the factory at Surat, about 1772 had returned once more to Bombay, where he lived at Belvedere House, a handsome residence, remarkable — as Major Wallace describes it, who has written a pleasant book of Indian travels — 'for its fine situation, close to the bay, and for the grand prospect.' This situation was unfortunate, in one sense, for the owner. It was well known

* The death of poor Draper took place in March 1805, at St James Street. He was seventy-seven years old when he was Second Counsellor at Bombay. [The account of Draper given here contains some inaccuracies. He was born, *not* in India, but in England. He came to England with his wife *not* in 1762, but in 1765.]

that Mr Draper was unhappy in not being the object of his wife's love.' A writer in the *Times of India* many years ago told what followed, collected from well-known traditions of the place:—

'There lay off Mazagon a king's cutter or sloop of war, commanded by a captain of the Royal Navy. Whether the captain had been a frequent visitor at the Counsellor's bungalow tradition does not tell; but it is plain there had been communications between the ship and that no doubt most hospitable mansion, so ruthlessly destroyed only a few years back. It is said that one day, whilst Daniel was securely taking his *siesta*, "his custom of an afternoon," his spouse stepped to the water side, where a boat from the king's ship awaited her, and to that stronghold of the waters she was taken.'

Major Wallace, however, gives her story a more romantic cast. 'Having persuaded,' he says, 'a gallant captain in the Navy to convey her to England on board his vessel, she was so closely watched that she had to escape by means of a ladder of ropes suspended from her bed-chamber verandah,

which enabled her at once to jump into the boat and into the arms of her new protector.' Douglas gives the name of the captain — Sir J. Clarke. And thus Yorick's beautiful and sentimental teaching bore fruit.

It is said that Mr Draper 'proceeded to put in force every available resource for pursuit of the fair fugitive, issuing a proclamation against the captain, and ordering one or more of the Indian navy ships to scour the seas and pursue after the buccaneer.' About 1874 Belvedere House, the scene of this escapade, was pulled down, owing to the ground being wanted for local improvements.

It is not surprising to find that the vanity of our heroine was such that in course of time she became eager to let her connection with Sterne be known, and she allowed copies of her famous correspondence to be taken by friends. A certain Captain I——, who was acquainted with her in India, used to relate how he succeeded in obtaining a copy of these famous letters. 'Being a woman,' he says, 'of a lively disposition and engaging manners, her society was much esteemed and eagerly sought after, though

she usually confined herself to a fixed circle.' He one day mentioned to her that copies of a correspondence between her and Sterne had been shown to him in England, and that he thought that hers were as good as Sterne's. Mrs Draper replied that no letters had passed between them. On which the captain confessed that when sailing for India he had gone to see Abraham Walker, the Deal pilot, who showed him Sterne's letter, recommending Eliza to his care, but he would not sell it nor allow a copy to be taken. She replied laughingly, 'You deserve to know a secret for the pains you take to discover it.' She then gave him a copy of the correspondence, assuring him that the motive of her denial was to protect herself from too curious inquiries. The captain took the letters with him to England, but they were destroyed in a curious way, someone having poured an acid into his desk with a view of destroying some important legal documents.

No doubt this exhibition of anxiety to secure her letters tickled the vanity of the heroine and tempted her into this indiscretion. The next step was to print them.

The lady came to England, and a publisher issued them, from whose statement it would appear that she had formally authorised this publication.

'It is very much to be lamented,' he says, 'that Eliza's modesty was invincible to all the publisher's endeavours to obtain her answers to those letters; her wit, penetration, and judgment, her happiness in the epistolary style, so rapturously commended by Mr Sterne, could not fail to furnish a rich entertainment for the public. The publisher could not help telling her that he wished to God she really was possessed of that vanity with which she was charged: to which she replied that she was so far from acquitting herself of vanity, that she suspected that to be the cause why she could not prevail on herself to submit her letters to the public eye; for although Mr Sterne was partial to everything of hers, she could not hope that the world would be so too.

Mr Wilkes was one of her friends — and perhaps admirers — and this may have been one of the reasons that interfered with his undertaking his life. We have this rather sensible letter of hers to 'the patriot': —

'I thank you for the French volume, Mr Wilkes, and I really feel myself obliged for the English pages; tho' the Eulogium which accompanied them makes me half afraid of indulging in something which I presume to call taste for the pleasure of wit and conversation, as there is nothing which I ought to be more apprehensive of than Praise from distinguished persons because it ever has had too powerful an effect on my imagination to render me capable of aspiring to merit in capital instances. I say not this with a view to disqualify and extort refinements in flattery, but from such a consciousness of my own imbecility as makes me very serious when reduced to the necessity of self-examination. If, therefore, you have the generosity which I take you to have, you will rather endeavour to correct my *foiblesse* than to add to it by your encomiums. I request my compliments, if you please, to Miss Wilkes, and am your much obliged and most obedient,

'ELIZA DRAPER.

'SUNDAY AFTERNOON, *Mar.* 22.'

There is another letter of hers, signed 'your grateful child,' eight pages long — a

regular 'ship's' letter — and which is written in a quiet, sensible strain. I give some portions of it.

'He (Draper) has lost his two clerks, and if I was not capable of assisting & maintaining his correspondence for him, I know not what he would do at this juncture. I only fulfil my duty, & have not the least merit in it — as a good Purvoe, that thoroughly understood English, and spelled properly, would answer his views still better. Louisa is very advantageously married to the Commander of our Forces, a Colonel Pemble: he is handsome, amiable, and magnificent in his temper: his income amounts to 30,000 Rupees a year: but I fear they stand little chance of saving a fortune, as they are gay, extravagant, & fond of company, but I know not if it signifies much, as they love India, are healthy, admired, and esteemed here, and not very desirous of exchanging affluence in the Eastern clime. They are on no terms with the Governor, neither visiting or being visited by him. . . . I hope to be favoured with long and interesting letters from Europe by our next

ship. England, which was always dear to me, was never so much so as now! The welfare of my dear children sits very near my heart, & I cannot help feeling great anxiety on their account, tho' I am confident of Mrs Whitehall's care & best attention to their true interest. God preserve the poor Babes. May they live to give satisfaction to their parents, and reflect honor on their amiable Protectors. I hope you had an agreeable summer in the society of my friend & little (?) by presenting my compliments to him, & best wishes for his health & enjoyment of England. We now wish him our head again. Would to heaven he had not left us a prey to the foolish policy and low cunning of a Hodges. The wish is entirely general — not a moist eye or grave countenance will be visible on his departure. O, he is gloriously hated and, I prognosticate, ever will be so, even by the wife of his bosom, if he is dotard enough with his jealous propensities & selfish particularities to make a second choice. But no — his avarice will prevent his marrying again; for a good woman would loathe his wealth with such an incumbrance as him-

self — and a bad one . . . happy — prays your ever grateful child . . . — ELIZA DRAPER.

'TELLICHERRY, *Ap.* 1769.

'*P. S.* — Mr Draper presents his most respectful compliments, with the sincerest assurances of his doing everything in his power for Stephen, if you send him to Bombay.'

It was during her residence in England that Eliza became acquainted with the Abbé Raynal, who celebrates her charms and merits, as we have seen, in some extraordinary raptures. 'Men declared,' he says, 'that no woman ever possessed so many graces, and even her own sex, which was rare, joined in their praise.' Yet she was 'only good-looking — not very good-looking.' She it was who inspired all his works, a statement not warranted by the facts, for the encomium is not found in their first edition, nor can we accept his statement that on her death-bed Eliza's thoughts were occupied with *him.* She said, it seems, 'This muse now looking down upon you is the Muse of History. This divinity floating in the air is Fame, who has brought me you.' In return he

registered a solemn vow that he would never write a line 'in which the world should not recognise his friend.'

Eliza died, as her tomb records, on August 3, 1778, aged only 35. 'Genius and benevolence,' says the inscription, 'were united in her,' but, as her admirer admitted, she was sadly deficient in the first; while Daniel Draper and Mrs Sterne, the widow, could most sincerely testify to her benevolence. She left two daughters, whom Walker, an Irish antiquarian, once met at Harrogate and found agreeable.

Such is the story of Yorick and Eliza.*

* [Most of this chapter first appeared in *Cornhill Magazine* for June 1887.]

CLOSING IN

CHAPTER X

CLOSING IN

THIS agitating episode and his late fit of illness left him very low in spirits and weak in body. He was beginning to find that his methods of life were unsubstantial, and offered but poor solace. He was estranged from his wife, who, it is probably the truth, could not live with him, while the public was beginning to look askance at him.

'I am unhappy,' he wrote; 'thy mother and thyself at a distance from me, and what can compensate for such a destitution? For God's sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation, besides, *I want thee near me, thou child* and darling of my heart.' He added too, as a motive that might influence Mrs Sterne, that people would naturally say their separation was from choice and not necessity. This piteous appeal from the hopeless Shan-

dean — writing in his Bond Street lodgings, ill in mind, broken down in body, at last seems to have produced an effect.

Presently he had a relapse. He used to dine with his friends in Gerrard Street on Sundays, and he was foolish enough to venture out on a cold Sunday after taking a 'James' Powder' — one of those fatal James' Powders which brought on Goldsmith's end. The results were, 'bad nights and much feverish agitation,' and the remedies were of the usual Sangrado order — bleeding two days in succession, leaving him 'almost dead.' He wrote to his friends from his bed an affectionate letter, full of gratitude. The physician, he said, told him his illness arose from his catching cold after the James' Powder; 'but he is mistaken,' said Mr Sterne, gracefully and affectionately, 'for I am certain that whatever bears that name must have efficacy with me. This friendly inquiry from Gerrard Street has poured balm into what blood I have left. . . . If I continue mending, it will yet be some time before I have strength enough to get out in a carriage. My first visit will be on a visit of true gratitude. I leave my kind friends to guess where. A

thousand blessings go along with this, and may Heaven preserve you both. Adieu, my dear sir, and dear lady.'

He presently concluded that country air was the fitting restorative — and that it would be well for him to exchange Bond Street for Coxwould as speedily as he could. By May the first * he was well again, and possibly 'merry and as mischievous as a monkey.' What this being as 'merry and mischievous as a monkey' meant in Mr Sterne's mind, it is not difficult to guess from his letter to the 'Hannah,' before quoted, and which was written about this time.† Nay, in this very letter to Mrs James, he gives an account of a strange Shandean adventure that befel him, and which it is extraordinary that any one should think of writing to a correct and modest lady. He had fixed his departure for the first of May,‡ but could not resist an invitation from Lord and Lady Spencer, who had made up a party to dine and sup — expressly for him. He had not lost his hold upon his fashionable friends. An earl heard

* [Not until the middle of May, was Sterne well enough to think of returning to Coxwold.]

† [The Hannah letters are placed too early by Mr Fitzgerald. They belong to the following October and November.]

‡ [This should be "the twenty-first of May."]

of his illness at Bath, and wrote up eagerly to inquire after him. To him Mr Sterne imparted a few sound reflections which had suggested themselves while he lay sick and broken in Bond Street; the 'few treacherous supports' the mind leans on in the world, '*the feigned compassion* of one — the flattery of a second — the civilities of a third — they all deceive.' In these latter days of his life, light of this sort seems to have been breaking in upon him — strange whispers, which came to him when he lay exhausted with his sunk and beaten chest and bloodless frame, and found a second to think over his gay, wild racket of an existence.

Thus, the next morning — a Friday * — when his chaise was at the door 'to take and convey this poor body to its legal settlement,' he wrote a hasty line to an Irish gentleman of fashion — 'J. Dillon, Esquire,' one of the March, Selwyn, and Gilly Williams *côterie*. 'I am ill — very ill,' he said; 'I am sick, both soul and body — it is a cordial to me to hear it is different with you. I am glad you are in a fair road to happiness; enjoy it long, my dear Dillon, whilst I — no matter what ——.'

* [May 22.]

He concludes : 'You rogue! you have locked up my boots, *and I go bootless home, and fear* I shall go bootless all my life.'

He travelled slowly, and was until Monday morning reaching Newark where he arrived much exhausted. 'Conveyed thus far,' as he wrote from the hotel to Stevenson, 'like a bale of cadaverous goods consigned to Pluto and Company, lying at the bottom of my chair upon a large pillow, which I had the *prévoyance* to purchase before I set out;' and there is something like pathos in his complaint. He goes on: 'I am worn out. . . . I know not what is the matter with me; *but some dérangement presses hard upon this machine;* still I think it will not be over at this bout. My love to Lee. We shall all meet from the east and from the south, and (as at last) be happy together. My kind respects to a few. — I am, dear Hall, truly yours, &c.'

There is a sad quaintness in these few sentences very simple and natural. But his friend could readily have told him what was the *dérangement* that pressed upon the poor machine. That imprudent dinner and supper at Lord Spencer's, which he rose from his bed

to go to, was but one more instance of the old Yorick folly. On the road, near Doncaster, he was so exhausted, that he had to stop at the archbishop's, with whom he remained two days. His Grace, therefore, had not been affected by the remonstrance that had been addressed to him.

When Mr Sterne was again established at Coxwould, having been conveyed thither in his post-chaise 'a bale of cadaverous goods,' his health began to improve. The 'good air, a quiet retreat and quiet reflection along with it, with an ass to milk and another to ride out upon, all do wonders.' And here, in this letter, we trace more of that altered and subdued tone which visited him during these latter months of his life — foreshadowings, as it were, of a final issue — with doubts as to whether his had been exactly the sort of life he could look back on without disquiet. 'I shall live this year, at least, I hope,' he wrote, '*be it but to give the world, before I quit it, as good impressions of me as you have*,' so he wrote to the black Sancho. 'I would only covenant for just so much health and spirits as are sufficient to carry my pen through the task I have set it this summer. But I am a resigned being,

Sancho, and take health and sickness just as the light and darkness, or the vicissitudes of the seasons, that is, just as it pleases God to send them.' This task which he hoped to be spared to finish, was his *Sentimental Journey.* It seems as though he may have intended to atone for past offences against decency, by his treatment of men and manners in this book; and it is curiously corroborative of this view, that the first volume does not contain a line offensive to morals, and is, on the contrary, pervaded with a gentle and subdued tone of sympathy, quite in harmony with the key in which he was writing. At this time, too — possibly because some of his cloth were looking coldly on him — he seems to have been inclined to deal with them less indulgently; for he had made Mr Shandy and the Captain take a ride to 'save a beautiful wood which the Dean and Chapter were hewing down to give to the poor,' and then added a sarcastic note to the effect that Mr Shandy 'must mean the poor in spirit, inasmuch as they divided the money amongst themselves' — a personal allusion to a Dean and Chapter very near him, who had, perhaps, insisted on sacrificing some pretty wood near Coxwould. He

also introduced his former patron, the Bishop of Gloucester. 'For what has this book done,' he said, alluding to his *Tristram*, 'more than the *Legation of Moses*, or the *Tale of a Tub*, that it may not swim down the gutter of Time along with them?'

He had begun to find an inexpressible relish in his place at Coxwould. He enjoyed his country associates, and felt as 'happy as a prince.' A shower of letters poured in upon him, all calling him to Scarborough, where the 'jolly set,' *i. e.*, 'Lord Granby and Co.,' were expecting him impatiently. Whether from being engaged with his books, or from some more wholesome feeling, he resisted the temptation. He described his new pastoral life to his friend Lee in a very tempting picture, like all his pictures: ''Tis a land of plenty; I sit down alone to venison, fish, and wild fowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with curds, and strawberries and cream, and all the simple plenty which a rich valley under Hamilton Hills can produce; with a clean cloth on my table, and a bottle of wine on my right hand to drink your health. I have a hundred hens and chickens about my yard; and not a parishioner catches a hare,

or a rabbit, or a trout but he brings it as an offering to me.' This last is a little testimony of popularity. His friend had been unsuccessful in some sentimental attachment, and Mr Sterne adds, that he would give him an invitation to Coxwould, 'for absence could lessen no attachment which virtue inspires!' He did not write to inquire about the lady, 'for,' he adds, 'even How d'yes to invalids, or to those who had been lately so, either call to mind what is past, or what may return; at least I find it so.'

He had now got a post-chaise of his own, with 'two long-tailed horses,' in which he took airings every day. He had many pastoral enjoyments, but he owned, sadly, that he had '*what was worst of all, a disquieted heart to reason with.*' To his friend Hall Stevenson, a week or so later, he opened his soul, with the same dispiriting, and almost despairing confession. 'As you are so well,' he said in August, 'rejoice, therefore, and let your heart be merry; mine ought upon the same score, for I have never been so well since I left college, *and should be a marvellous happy man, but for some reflections which bow down my spirits; but if I live but even three or four*

years, I will acquit myself with honour; and — *no matter!* We will talk this over when we meet.'

To his kind friends, the Jameses, he wrote very much in the same dejected tone. All his letters to them were of the same genuine affectionate pattern.

'It is with as much true gratitude as ever heart felt, that I sit down to thank my dear friends, Mr and Mrs James, for the continuation of their attention to me; but for this last instance of their humanity and politeness to me, I must ever be their debtor — I never can thank you enough, my dear friends, and yet I thank you from my soul —— and for the single day's happiness your goodness would have sent me, I wish I could send you back thousands —— I cannot, but they will come of themselves —— and so God bless you. — I am now got perfectly well, but was a month after my arrival in the country in but a poor state —— *my body has got the start, and is at present more at ease than my mind* —— but this world is a school of trials, and so heaven's will be done! — I hope you have both enjoyed all that I have wanted —— and

to complete your joy, that your little lady flourishes like a vine at your table, to which I hope to see her preferred by next winter. I am now beginning to be truly busy with my *Sentimental Journey* — the pains and sorrows of this life having retarded its progress — but I shall make up my lee-way, *and overtake every body in a very short time.*

'What can I send you that Yorkshire produces? tell me — I want to be of use to you, for I am, my dear friends, with the truest value and esteem,

'Your ever obliged,

'L. STERNE.'

Mrs Sterne, as we have seen, had now settled to come to England; she had at last yielded to her husband's importunities, and announced her intention; but, by some fatality, about half a dozen of Mr Sterne's letters to her had gone astray, which gave him a good deal of concern, 'as it wore the aspect of unkindness, which she by no means merits from me.' This was to his friends the Jameses.

It was now the beginning of August. In June he was 'in high spirits: care never

enters his cottage.' But now the spirits had fallen to zero. He sat moping in his vicarage, with no other company than his cat. 'I long to return to you,' he wrote to Crazy Castle; 'but I sit here alone as solitary and sad as a tom-cat, which, by-the-bye, is all the company I keep; he follows me from the parlour to the kitchen, into the garden, and every place. I wish I had a dog. My daughter will bring me one.'

We have a sketch of his dog in a letter to his daughter about this time: and again we must remark the gentle, simple tone he was gradually falling into. 'My pleasures are few in compass. My poor cat sits purring beside me. Your lively French dog shall have his place on the other side of my fire; but if he is as devilish as when I first saw him, I must tutor him, *for I will not have my cat abused.* In short, I will have nothing devilish about me.'

About this time he lost the use of his chaise and 'long-tail'd horses,' from an accident to his postilion. One of Mr Sterne's pistols had gone off in his hand — a mishap which, told by his master, becomes Shandean. 'He instantly fell on his knees,' wrote Mr

Sterne, 'and said Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, — at which, like a good Christian, he stopped, not remembering any more of it. The affair was not so bad as he at first thought, for it has only *bursten* two of his fingers (he says).'

By the end of this month, too, he was 'bad again.' The old spitting of blood visited him once more. As he lay weak and exhausted upon his back, some neighbour made his way upstairs to see him. 'That unfeeling brute . . . . ,' says Mr Sterne in his odd way, 'came and drew my curtains, and with a voice like a trumpet, halloed in my ear, "Z—ds, what a fine kettle of fish you have brought yourself to." In a faint voice I bade him leave me, for comfort sure was never administered in so rough a manner.' This little scene, short as it is, is very graphic, and ludicrous. In fact, all the little sketches that turn up in his letters show plainly that his humour of Tristram came naturally to him, and broke out on other occasions than when he was at his desk writing for the press.'

THE LAST LONDON VISIT

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST LONDON VISIT

AT the beginning of September, he was tempted to go to Scarborough for some sea-bathing. He remained but ten days, and during that time was the guest of an Irish bishop — 'one of the best of our bishops' — most likely Dr Jemmatt Browne, Bishop of Cork.* 'His household consisted of a gentleman and two ladies, which, with the good bishop and myself, made so good a party, that we kept much to ourselves.'

His 'mitred host' took a great fancy to him, and tried to tempt him over to Ireland by a living. They left Scarborough together, and being fifteen miles 'off,' the bishop and his family went on to London, and Mr Sterne returned home. His friends, the Jameses, heard that he had actually gone

* This is the only Irish bishop's name we find in the list of subscribers to his *Sentimental Journey*.

up to London with the episcopal party, and were a little wounded at his not coming to them. 'This, I suppose, was the reason assigned for my being there. *Charity,*' adds Mr Sterne bitterly, thinking of the old calumnies that persecuted Yorick, '*would add a little to the account, and give out that 'twas on the score of one, and perhaps both of the ladies.*'

The Avignon ladies were now at length starting for England. There was a little gaiety and a little business to be got through before they were to leave. The gaieties were a series of *fêtes champêtres*, given by the Marquis de Sade, a relation of his friend the abbé of the same name. The Dowager Lady Carlisle met the abbé later, and thought him 'the liveliest little old man' she had ever met. The business was the drawing on Mr Sterne for forty louis,' a draft he at once took measures to provide for. Mrs Sterne, who had a little estate of her own, was consulting the Paris banker on purchasing a little annuity for her daughter; and Mr Sterne knowing, perhaps, that advice from him might be accepted doubtfully, advised her to insure her life. For, as he

truly said, if Mrs Sterne died before his daughter, the latter would suffer seriously.

He was still desponding. To a 'Sir William,' another of his roystering friends, who was pressing him to come back to Scarborough, and bantering him freely, he wrote a little banter in return, — 'Enough of such nonsense. The past is over, and I can justify myself unto myself — can you do as much? No, faith! "You can feel." Ay, so can my cat. . . . . but caterwauling disgusts me. I had rather raise a gentle flame than have a different one raised on me. *Now, I take Heaven* to witness, after all this *badinage, my heart is innocent; and the sporting of my pen is equal — just equal to what I did in my boyish days, when I got astride of a stick and galloped away. The truth is this — that my pen governs me, not me my pen.*' And though there is a reckless, half-defiant tone in this declaration, still, taking it with what he has said so lately, and the gaiety of the man to whom it is spoken, we may possibly accept it as a genuine and sincere profession of the spirit that guided him when he wrote his strange, rambling *Shandy* olla podrida.

To the same gentleman he spoke of the new work then fast advancing, which was to convince him and others 'that my feelings are from the heart; and then that heart is not of the worst of moulds. Praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has often made me wretched, *yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt.*'

On the last day of September the travellers got to York; and going in with his chaise Mr Sterne met his wife and darling daughter once more. With the latter he was in raptures; and the fond father, writing to his friends, could not contain his delight at her manners, mind, figure, and everything about her. She had come back 'an elegant, accomplished little slut.' 'Nature, my dear Panchaud'—the banker had overpowered them with civilities as they passed through Paris—'breathes in all her composition, and except a little vivacity, *which is a fault in the world we live in,* I am fully content with her mother's care of her; for she is as accomplished a slut as France can produce.' Charming, indeed, are all his letters wherein this favoured child figures; and for the sake

of this affection — so true, so simple, so natural — much may be forgiven him. A cold, professional sentimentalist, hawking about his tears and sham sorrows could not have found room for so homely a thing as mere paternal affection.

To the Jameses he described her in the same fond terms some six weeks afterwards, when the sense of surprise and novelty might have worn off. 'She is a dear, good creature, affectionate, and most elegant in body and mind; she is all Heaven could give me in a daughter, but like other blessings, not given but lent; for her mother loves France, and this dear part of me must be torn from my arms to follow the mother, who seems inclined to establish her in France, where she has had many advantageous offers. Do not smile at my weakness, when I say I don't wonder at it.'

With Coxwould now re-peopled, he pushed on steadily with his new book, and 'spurred on his Pegasus,' in order to have it ready for the customary Christmas offering. He found it an agreeable labour, and 'suited to the frame of mind I have been in for some time past;' but later on he admitted to a noble friend that

he had 'worn out both my spirits and my body with the *Sentimental Journey*,' and had 'torn my whole frame into pieces by my feelings.' There was no doubt but that his nerves were giving way, and he was laying out his favourite remedy — a visit to London, at Christmas, with his new wares — a visit in which his wish to see his friends, the Jameses, again had some share. 'I long sadly to see you,' he wrote to them. 'With what pleasure shall I embrace your little pledge, whom I hope to see every hour increasing in stature and favour both with God and man. I kiss all your hands with a most devout and friendly heart. No man can wish you more good *than your meagre friend does* — few so much, for I am with infinite cordiality, gratitude, and honest affection, etc.' That he was thinking of them with a sincere regard at a distance, is plain from a postscript to an earl of his acquaintance. 'If your lordship is in town this Spring, I should be happy if you became acquainted with my friends in Gerrard Street; you would esteem the husband and honour the wife. She is the reverse of most of her sex: they have various pursuits; *she but one, that of pleasing her husband.*'

THE LAST LONDON VISIT

By the beginning of December he and Mrs Sterne had their plans finally arranged. She was determined to return to France with her daughter in the Spring, but in the meantime a house 'ready furnished' had been hired in York, where they might spend the winter and have some gaiety. Mr Sterne was to go up to London in January with his book and stay a month or two there. Surely this was considerate on the part of the father, who did not wish in his absence to consign them to the solitude of Coxwould. Nor must it be supposed that these expeditions of his were without direct profit to all their interests. Already another Irish bishop,* the Bishop of Ross, was making him offers, and an advantageous exchange of livings had been proposed to him — to give up Sutton and Stillington, for £350 a year in Surrey, and only thirty miles from London. But he rejected the rich offer and the Surrey preferment. If his wife and daughter would have gone with him he might have been tempted. 'With her sweet, light burden in my arms,' he wrote of his Lydia, 'I could get fast up the hill of pre-

* [Out of Dr Jemmatt Brown, the Bishop of Cork and Ross, Mr Fitzgerald makes two bishops, one for Cork and one for Ross.]

ferment if I chose it, but without my Lydia, if a mitre were offered me it would sit uneasily upon my brow.' These episcopal dreams were unsubstantial enough. Though it 'hailed mitres' not a single one was to fall on Yorick's head; but it is clear that he was now on the road to some smaller preferment.

When they had completed their arrangements and moved into York, his spirits began to sink again. Every day was bringing him nearer that separation. 'My heart bleeds, Lee,' he wrote with true pathos, 'when I think of parting with my child — 'twill be like the separation of soul and body . . . and equal to nothing but what passes at that tremendous moment: *and like it in one respect — for she will be in one kingdom whilst I am in another.* You will laugh at my weakness,' he goes on, 'but I can't help it — for she is a dear, disinterested girl.' And then he tells with pride of a little trait of character, how he had put ten guineas into her hand for her 'private expenses' at York, and how she had refused this present on the plea that their journey home had already 'straitened him,' and that she would rather put a hun-

dred guineas in his pocket 'than take ten out of it.'

But now on the eve of his departure he was once more seized with the old shape of illness — 'cast down by a fever and bleeding at the lungs,' which kept him in bed three weeks. But he struggled through — the last time he was to struggle through — and rose 'worn down to a shadow,' and weak as a child. In this state he was comforted by a letter from his friends, the Jameses, and wrote them a letter which reflects the tone of his mind.* 'I had the favour of yours,' he says, 'which, till to-day I have not been able to thank you both kindly for, as I now cordially do, as well as for all your professions and proofs of goodwill to me. I will not and have not balanced accounts with you in this. All I know is that I honour and value you more than I do any good creatures upon earth. . . . And that I would not wish your happiness, and the success of whatever conduces to it, more than I do, was I your brother. . . . I thank you, my dear friend, for what you say so kindly about my daugh-

* I venture to quote more of these letters to the Jameses than of any others, as they are important testimonies to his character.

ter — it shows your good heart; for as she is a stranger 'tis a free gift in you, but when she is known to you, shall win it fairly, *but, alas! when this event is to happen is in the clouds.*

'What a sad scratch of a letter! but I am weak, my dear friends, both in body and mind — so God bless you. You will see me enter like a ghost, so I tell you beforehand not to be frightened. I am, my dear friends, with the truest attachment and esteem, ever yours, etc.'*

After Christmas Day,† he started with his friend Hall for town. It was to be his last journey. He was still ill, and had scarcely shaken off his fever; travelling under such circumstances was hardly prudent. Still, if he had remained, his restless mind would have been chafing at the restraint. He embraced his wife and daughter, and for the last time was to look upon the Lydia he so idolised. No doubt the separation was 'like

* He was able, too, at this time, to sit for his bust — a vigorous and characteristic head by Nollekens. There are two of these busts now in existence. The original is at Skelton Castle, and was perhaps done at the request of Mr Hall; the other is in the Yarborough collection. There is, besides, the terra-cotta bust done at Rome.

† [Sterne was in York on December 28, 1767. He must have set out for London a day or two later.]

the parting of soul and body.' He had done for ever with his 'sweet retirement' of Coxwould, his Cathedral stall.

Mrs Sterne and her daughter remained behind at York, in the house which he had hired for them. They engaged in the York gaieties. Miss Lydia Sterne must have been possessed of unusual attractions, with a certain piquancy reflected from her father — heightened too by a French education and 'that vivacity' which he thought present in too extreme a degree. Making every allowance for Mr Sterne's partial admiration, she must have been attractive. Some time ago there was to be seen a portrait of a young girl and spaniel, 'The French Dog,' done by a French artist — Charpentier — a very graceful portrait, and always accepted as that of Mr Sterne's daughter.

In addition to the vivacity she had brought home, she had also contracted a little French vanity, and perhaps a little French folly. The letters she wrote after her father's death exhibit a curious mixture of flippancy and childishness. She was coming home with all the toilette glories of rouge-pots and cosmetics, which her father, thinking perhaps of that luckless

Irish belle — the beautiful Coventry — who had killed herself with white lead, sternly insisted should be flung into the Sorgue before she set out. 'I will have no rouge put on in England,' was his firm decision, and perhaps the harshest thing he ever wrote to her. She was left behind for the gay York winter: certain of the admiration which her natural charms and French manners were sure to attract; certain, at least, of being pointed to with interest and curiosity, as the lively daughter of quaint Tristram. The father of Mr Waterton, the pleasant traveller and skilful naturalist, used to tell his son how he had been introduced to Miss Lydia Sterne at the great York balls in Lord Burlington's Assembly Rooms, and had often stood up with her for a minuet.

Mr Sterne was again at his old Bond Street * lodgings, and already found his health a little better. 'I continue to mend,' he wrote to his friends in Gerrard Street upon the first day † of the New Year, 'and doubt not but this, with all other evils and uncertainties of

* [Sterne occupied rooms at number 41, over a silk-bag shop.]

† [This is a mistake. The date of this letter cannot be earlier than January 4, 1768.]

life, will end for the best.' It was a wet morning and he was afraid to go out, so he writes to send all compliments and best wishes to the firesides. He was 'half engaged or more' for the Sunday, but would try hard to get off; if unsuccessful, he would 'glide like a shadow uninvited to Gerrard Street some day this week, that we may eat our bread and meat in love and peace together. God bless you both.' But with all this jealous care of himself he could not resist the old seductions, and before long was mortgaged heavily, weeks in advance, to the old fatal round of parties and entertainments, 'tyed down,' as he put it, 'neck and heels twice over.' Yet it seems to have been more a feeling of inability to resist, than a sense of enjoyment; for he complains with weariness of the invasion of his rooms in Bond Street by streams of company, who came in the morning and did not leave until dinner-time. After these levees a sense of utter prostration used to come upon him.

It is Northcote who picked up a curious and in part improbable story about Sterne's conversation, the date of which may be about this time. Sir Joshua had a dinner-party, at

which the well-known Mrs Carter, a pious lady of the day, was a guest; and it is said that during the dinner she attacked Mr Sterne for his free conversation with such wit and severity, that he never recovered this sharp, public reprimand. It is improbable that one who had seen so much of the world could have been so sensitive, but we may be inclined to suspect, if the story be true, that with that subdued feeling and sense of the hopelessness of his recovery which was now weighing on his mind, he may have shown a depression at the reproof, which those who were present might have imputed to the lady's powers of reproach. There was quite enough in the state of his health at that time to account reasonably for his death.*

* I feel some delicacy in touching on the subject of two anecdotes relating to Sterne's speech and manners in society; but an impartial biographer could not pass them by. Doctor Johnson told Sir John Hawkins that the only occasion he had been in Sterne's society, the latter had exhibited a very indecent print; and Doctor Dibdin mentions having heard of a copy of the *Sentimental Journey*, illustrated by Sterne himself with very gross pictures. Testimony of this sort, coming from two such distinct quarters, does, indeed, seem of weight. To the last anecdote, however, there is quite a convincing answer. The *Journey* appeared about a week before his last illness — in fact, at a time when he was already physically helpless and in the grasp of death. In the tone and temper he was then, and with the consciousness that his end was not far away, it seems utterly improbable that he could have had time or opportunity for such an outrage. It may be said that it was the MS. of the book, written many months before, that was so adorned; but this I have seen, and there are no such illus-

While in Bond Street, he received from America a present of a rather odd sort. A Doctor Eustace had come into possession of a curiously-carved walking-stick which had belonged to 'Governor Dobbs.' This 'piece of Shandean statuary' Mrs Dobbs presented to Doctor Eustace, and he forwarded it to the author of *Tristram*, hoping 'it might prove so ample a field for meditation, as a button-hole or a broom-stick.' Mr Sterne acknowledged the compliment gratefully, and on February the ninth, about six weeks before his death, wrote to the American gentleman what may be accepted as his final profession and last protest against what he considered the misconstruction that had been put upon his books. Reading it so near to his death, it does, indeed, seem almost like Yorick's protest. 'Your walking-stick is in no sense more Shandaick than in that of its having more handles than one; the parallel breaks only in this, that in using the stick every one will take the handle which suits his convenience: in *Tristram Shandy* the handle is taken which suits the

trations. As to what Doctor Johnson saw, we must remember his violent prejudices against 'the man Sterne,' and that the house and host whom Johnson honoured with his company, was not likely to be the house or host to whom such an exhibition would be acceptable.

passions — their ignorance or their sensibility. 'There is so little true feeling in the herd of the world, that I wish I could have got an Act of Parliament when the books first appeared that none but wise men should look unto them.' He then adds — that all the people of genius in the country, 'a few hypocrites and Tartuffes excepted,' had come round to his side, and he says that it has had a wonderful reception in France, Germany, and Italy. Thus we see to the very end he strangely believed that he was a sort of victim to the prejudices of a faction, and to the last, with a perversion not in the least unnatural, supposed what he had written to be harmless.

At this time the entertainments of the notorious Mrs Cornely, at the Soho Rooms, were the fashionable *fureurs* of the moment. This was owing not so much to the amusement itself, as to an artful rigour in the issuing of tickets. During the first days of this new year, one of these select festivals was to be celebrated.*

* There was an advertisement in the papers to this effect: — 'Mrs Cornely begs leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry, Subscribers to the Society in Soho Square, that the Second Meeting will be on Thursday next. The Tickets are this year transferable either to ladies or gentlemen — the same as they were the winter before last.'

Mr and Mrs James were wishing to get a ticket for this important festival, and though they knew Lord Upper Ossory, and other persons of fashion, they turned to Mr Sterne to help them in their necessity. Most likely they wanted it not for themselves, but for 'Miss Ascough, the wise;' 'Miss Pigot, the witty;' or some other young lady of their circle. Mr Sterne was not a subscriber this year, which, like a straw as it is upon the surface, shows that he had in some degree foresworn frivolity. But he sent about diligently to one after another of his 'Soho friends.' If he failed he hoped they would do him the justice to believe him 'truly miserable.'

The next day, ill as he was, he hurried over the town, posted to the Secretary of State, to Sir George Macartney — now to be a new peer — to Mr Lascelles, to Mr Fitz-Maurice, begging, importuning, for one of these coveted tickets — but he said truly, he 'could as soon get a place at Court.'

Mrs James had just been sitting to West, the painter, who, in Mr Sterne's opinion, had made an admirable likeness. It was not finished, and on Sunday, the 7th of March, Mr Sterne was to 'tread the old pleasing road from Bond to

Gerrard Street,' and be there before four, so as to have 'a little time and a little daylight to see Mrs James's picture.' To West, Lydia Sterne was to sit a little later. Mrs James herself was something of an artist, and Mr Sterne sent her as a present a box of water-colours, and gave a few lessons. He borrowed some sketches touched with chalk, from a gentleman who had travelled in Italy, as subjects for her to copy. This gentleman had sent him a set of prints, which Mr Sterne promised himself to hang up in his study — 'if,' he added, with but too faithful a foreboding, 'I recover from my state of health, *and live to revisit Coxwould this summer.*'

Mr Sterne's friend also was to dine in Gerrard Street on the following Sunday, and it was settled that they should go together at the same time, a little earlier than usual, so as to have light to see West's picture. But even on that Sunday, he could not be free or at rest: for Mr Beauclerk — Boswell's Beauclerk — had engaged him to breakfast, and a nobleman had secured the reversion of his company for an hour at least, after the breakfast. So to the end, the old racket was in his ears, the old

din and hurly-burly of society was echoing about him.

This Sunday dinner at Gerrard Street was to be Yorick's last festival. It is something to think that when he made his bow to society he passed from the quiet, pure atmosphere of that good and virtuous family.

The new book was now all but ready, and in a note dated Thursday, which he wrote to his 'dear friends' jointly, excusing himself for a mistake of Saturday for Sunday, the old dining day: — 'I am astonished I could make any mistake in a card wrote by Mrs James, in which my friend is as unrivalled as in a hundred greater excellencies.' He promises that his book will be out on the Thursday following, but possibly on the Wednesday afternoon. They did not appear until the latter of these days, which was the 27th of February. The price was the usual one of five shillings for the two pretty volumes, and subscribers were respectfully requested to send for their copies to Messrs Becket and P. de Hondt, in the Strand. The work itself was announced as 'Vol. 1 and 2, of a *Sentimental Journey through France and*

Italy,' showing that this, too, was an idea which he would have expanded, like *Tristram*, through many volumes. He at first had laid out a change in the shape of publication, and thought ambitiously of a stately quarto, with handsome margin, the price to be half-a-guinea. But wisely he returned to the favourite *Shandy* size — the compact little pocket volumes, which were now so familiar to the public. How much has the world lost — how many charming pictures of Italian life and character — by the sudden relaxing of those thin fingers and the busy pen they held!

This was now at hand. About the second week of the next month, being still 'tied down neck and heels with engagements,' he was seized with a chest attack, which he took for influenza, but which clung to him with more than usual obstinacy. He struggled with it, and seemed to think he would as usual come off victorious. Just at that time a letter came to him from his daughter, which must have had a chilling, dispiriting effect, notwithstanding that it set out with news of *The Journey* being read and admired in York by every one.

He seems to have been much agitated by what the mother had told her daughter, that it was his intention to bequeath the care of his Lydia to the Indian lady, whom the world knew as Eliza. 'The subject of thy letter,' wrote Mr Sterne with some agitation, 'has astonished me. She could know but little of my feelings to tell thee that I should bequeath thee as a legacy to Mrs (Draper).' He then reassures her, and tells her how Mrs James will watch over her — 'the friend whom I have so often talked and wrote about; from her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend.' He then alludes to the success of his book; 'but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion — the want of health bows me down — this vile influenza — *be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better of it*, and shall be with you both the first of May; and if I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child, unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.'

Nothing can be more tenderly delicate than that hurried correction of himself, 'be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better

of it;' and the gentle way — almost artful — in which he goes on to prepare his daughter's mind for the worst. 'If I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child. But I think, my Lydia, thy mother will survive me — do not deject her spirits with thy affections on my account.' He sends them both a present of a necklace and buckles. 'I am never alone,' he goes on, 'the kindness of my friends is ever the same. *I wish, though, I had thee to nurse me; but I am deny'd that.* Write to me twice a week at least. God bless thee, my child; and believe me *ever, ever* thy affectionate father,

'L. S.'

'If I ever revisit Coxwould!' He was hurrying fast from that 'sweet retirement.' What he took for a 'vile influenza,' became a pleurisy; and on the Thursday following (March 10th) he was bled three times, and on the next day blistered. He was prostrate and exhausted for several days after this violent treatment; but as he lay there, the thought of the child he loved so dearly came upon him, and with a feeble hand he was just able to write a few tottering characters

to his friend, Mrs James. So piteous and touching an appeal has rarely come from a death-bed: it was the poor, broken, gasping, dying Yorick's last letter. In it we seem to hear a humble acknowledgment of errors, and a cry for pardon for 'follies which my heart, not my head, betrayed me into!'—a declaration we may accept as genuine, and which is the true key to all his Shandean sins, errors, mistakes, and follies.

'*15th March*, TUESDAY.

'Your poor friend is scarce able to write —he has been at death's door this week with a pleurisy — I was bled three times on Thursday, and blister'd on Friday — The physician says I am better — God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while of gaining strength. — Before I have gone thro' half this letter, I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times — Mr James was so good to call upon me yesterday. I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him, and he overjoy'd me by talking a great deal of you. — Do, dear Mrs James, entreat him to come to-morrow, or next day, for perhaps I have

not many days, or hours, to live — I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself worse — that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror — my spirits are fled — 'tis a bad omen — do not weep, my dear Lady — your tears are too precious to shed for me — bottle them up, and may the cork never be drawn. — Dearest, kindest, gentlest, and best of women! may health, peace, and happiness prove your handmaids. — If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemn'd — which my heart, not my head, betray'd me into. Should my child, my Lydia, want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom? — You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action. — I wrote to her a fortnight ago, and told her what, I trust, she will find in you — Mr James will be a father to her — he will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence. — Commend me to him — as I now commend you to that Being who takes under

his care the good and kind part of the world. — Adieu! all grateful thanks to you and Mr James.

'Your poor affectionate friend,

'L. STERNE.'

This was Tuesday. Friday was the last day of his life. He seems to have been left there, at Bond Street, — alone, deserted, and entirely dependent (scarcely in the sense he had wished) on the hired offices of a lodging-house servant.*

But little is known of his last moments. Towards four o'clock in the afternoon he complained of cold in his feet, and asked the attendant to chafe them. This suggests the end of Falstaff. It seemed to relieve him; but presently he said the cold was mounting yet higher; and while she was striving to kindle a warmth in his feet and ankles, which a more awful power was driving away, someone knocked at the hall-door, and the landlady opening it, found it was a footman sent to inquire after Mr Sterne's

* M. Janin, with an eye to a bit of ghastly sentimentality wholly indefensible, transforms this person into 'Mad. —— de ——, sa belle et aimable garde-malade,' and makes the dying Yorick place her hand upon his heart.

health. In Clifford Street close by, 'Fish' Crawford was having a grand dinner-party, served by his 'French cook,' and most of the guests at table were friends of the dying humorist. Of the company were the Dukes of Grafton and Roxburghe, the Earls of March and Ossory; Mr Garrick, Mr Hume, and Mr James. Someone having mentioned his illness — Mr James most probably — it was proposed to send to know how he was, and the footman, whose name has been preserved, was despatched to New Bond Street to inquire.

The landlady was not able, or did not care, to give him the latest news, but bade him go up and inquire of the attendant. He did so, and entered the room just as the deserted Shandean was expiring. He stood by and waited to see the end; he noted how the wasted arm was suddenly raised, as if to ward off something, caught a murmur of 'Now it is come!' and then saw his frame relax in death.*

Such was Yorick's end — a footman and a sick-nurse watching his agonies! The foot-

* Such is the account given by James Macdonald, the Scotch footman, in his *Memoirs*.

man went his way back to the merry party of gentlemen in Clifford Street, and told what he had seen. The gentlemen, he says, were all very sorry, and lamented him very much. We can almost hear the after-dinner panegyric: Hume and Garrick could have told of his freaks in Paris, and bewailed with convivial grief how Yorick had been no one's enemy but his own. Mr James could have said something about his good heart. Then, as of course, the claret went round, and Lord March went back again to the praises of 'the Rena,' or the 'Zamperini.'

So Yorick passed away, lonely, abandoned. Not in this sense, truly, did he mean that poor bald scrap of philosophy which he had set down in his *Tristram*, to be interpreted — when he wished to die in an inn, and to have the cold, hired offices of strangers to soothe his last moments. This was a poor bit of Shandyism, set down to startle the crowd. Perhaps it came back on him, when he saw the footman standing in the doorway, and felt a hand stripping him of his ornaments. For it was said, that while one hired hand was chafing the poor Shandean's icy limbs, the other was busy plundering him of his gold

sleeve buttons.* But, as will be seen, a still more horrid mystery — like the *feu follet* of a graveyard — was destined to overshadow what remained of Yorick.

'Died yesterday,' said the journals of Saturday, 'at his lodgings, in Bond Street, the Rev. Mr Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, some volumes of *Sermons*, and the *Sentimental Journey*.' Others added, 'Alas! Poor Yorick!' Poor Yorick indeed! when the very bookseller's hack, who made profit out of the new edition of his works, could prefix to it so cruel and so illogical a statement as the following: 'Mr Sterne died as he lived, the same indifferent, careless creature; *as*, a day or two before his death, he seemed not in the least affected by his approaching dissolution.'

In the Bayswater Road, not very far from Tyburn Gate, a new burying-ground had been opened — attached to that church in Hanover Square, where the more fashionable marriage-rites are celebrated. We can readily find our way to it now, for it is notorious among the neglected graveyards of London: and is useful as a sort of huge pit for the rubbish of

* This was told to Doctor Ferrier.

the ruinous houses that hem it in closely all round. Weeds rioting in their impurity, yawning graves, headstones staggering over, dirt, neglect, and a squalid-looking dead-house, all soiled and grimed, with a belfry and a bell — this is now, or was until lately, the condition of the graveyard where Sterne is supposed to lie. It was then 'the new burying-ground, near Tyburn;' and to this spot, on the day of his interment, at twelve o'clock noon, came a single mourning coach, with 'two gentlemen inside.' One of them is known to have been Becket, his publisher; the other we fairly assume to have been his friend Mr James. Elia's Sam Salt told Smith that he also was of the party. The bell, over the soiled and grimed dead-house, was not allowed to ring. And in this 'private' manner (a privacy almost amounting to shame), was the body of the great humorist consigned to earth. The 'two gentlemen' represented the splendid roll of nobility and gentry that 'pranced' before his sermons! One more instance of that fatal blight of desertion that seems to attend on the jesters of society at their grave.

Now follows that strange and ghastly scene,

at which the meagre figure of poor Yorick, upon which he and others were so often merry, was to make a last appearance.

When the 'two gentlemen' were seeing the earth laid upon their friend's remains, there were other and more profane eyes watching from the road, and marking the spot. At that time the tribe of resurrection men pursued their calling as lawlessly as highwaymen did theirs upon the road. And this 'new Tyburn burying-ground' had already acquired a notoriety, as being the scene of constant outrages of this kind. Only a few months before, it had become necessary to place regular watchers there, and a large mastiff dog: in spite of which precautions, the infamous spoliation continued.*

Two nights after, on the 24th, the men came, dug up the body, placed it in a case, and sent it away down to Cambridge.

'Mr Collignon, B.M.,' of Trinity, was then Professor of Anatomy, and it had been disposed of to him. These aids to medical science being costly, and procured with difficulty, Mr Collignon invited some friends to see him illustrate anatomy on the body

* See *St. James's Chronicle*, Nov. 1767.

that had been sent down to him from London; and an old friend of Mr Sterne, who was of the party, was inexpressibly shocked at recognising the familiar features, and fainted away on the spot. It was too late, unfortunately, to save the body from the knife, for the dissection had nearly been completed.

What a close to Yorick's strange career, which began in wanderings, and brought him back thus finally to his old University! There is even a grim, lurid Shandeism over the scene, a charnel-house humour in that recognition of the strange lean Yorick features — more lean in death — upon the dissecting table.

But the evidence on which the story is founded seems too convincing not to be accepted. There had been many indistinct shapes of the statement — some improbable — but all pointing the same way. Mr Allan Cunningham had heard that the body had been sold by the landlady in discharge of her rent; a few months later it was stated that 'the body of the late Mr Sterne' had been 'anatomised.' The story was accepted at the time as true, and was

in the newspapers. The late Mr Malone said that he had actually spoken with the gentleman who was present at the dissection and who had recognised the features; and an unknown note-maker has written on his fly-leaf of an old copy of the *Sentimental Journey* — the first edition — that 'the Rev. Mr Green told me that, being at Cambridge a short time after, he saw the skeleton, and had the story confirmed to him by the Professor.'* At the time it was notorious that the graveyard was nightly plundered by the 'resurrection men,' while the mean funeral indicated that it was a person of humble rank. This seems to confirm the hideous tale. For this reason it was natural that no monument has been erected to mark the spot where he had been interred. A poetical epitaph by Garrick, of indifferent merit, went round and was admired; but it was felt, perhaps, that the circumstances were too painful, and that a memorial would only revive the recollection. Long after, two persons — freemasons — noted the absence of a monument, and set up a headstone, with an inscription begin-

* Willis's *Current Notes.*

ning — '*Near* this place is interred,' etc., which is yet a further confirmation of the story; as it shows that the spot could not be pointed out. The headstone, with its inscription, is indeed a memorial, not of Sterne, but of these masons' vanity and bad taste.*

It is strange to think that there were people who might have taken the skull of a second Yorick into their hand, as the Prince of Denmark did that of the first, and have

* 'Near to this Place
Lies the Body of
The Reverend Laurence Sterne, A.M.,
Died September 13th, 1768,
Aged 53 years.
"*Ah! molliter ossa quiescant.*"
'If a sound Head, warm Heart, and Breast humane,
Unsullied Worth, and Soul without a stain;
If mental Powers could ever justly claim
The well-won Tribute of immortal Fame,
Sterne was the *Man*, who, with gigantic Stride,
Mowed down luxuriant Follies far and wide.
Yet what, though keenest Knowledge of Mankind
Unseal'd to him the Springs that move the Mind;
What did it cost him? ridicul'd, abus'd,
By Fools insulted, and by Prudes accus'd,
In his, mild reader, view thy future Fate,
Like him despise, what 'twere a sin to hate.

'This monumental stone was erected by two brother masons; for although he did not live to be a member of their society, yet as his all incomparable performances evidently prove him to have acted by rule and square, they rejoice in this opportunity of perpetuating his high and irreproachable character to after ages.
'W. & S.'

Both Sir Walter Scott and the 'Brother Masons' were mistaken as to the month of his death. It is to the honour of a clergyman of the parish — a Mr Potter — that a few years back he made a shilling subscription to have this headstone cleaned and repaired.

moralised over it sadly. They might have thought of his life, weighed his character, not too partially, but with allowance — as I — and have summed up all, something after this fashion: He was more or less weak, vain, careless, idle, and given to pleasure. He was free of pen and speech — profane sometimes — and did no honour to the gown he wore — these were the general scandals of his time, which seized on him like a contagion. He had the one redeeming gift of a kind, fatherly affection, a careful consideration (wonderful in a careless being) for the pecuniary interests of those for whom it was his duty to provide, a genial humour, and, strange as it may seem, a sort of natural piety. He was unfortunate in his marriage — unfortunate in his friends — unfortunate in the age, which seemed to strive how it should turn his head with flatteries; and unfortunate in a frame that was always ailing. His were, in short, as he said over and over again so pathetically, follies of the head and not of the heart. These things should be kept in view; and, when we would anticipate the task of the Recording Angel, should prompt us — not to blot out the entry for ever, but be indulgent as we can.

MR STERNE'S WIDOW AND DAUGHTER

CHAPTER XII

MR STERNE'S WIDOW AND DAUGHTER

IT turned out that the widow and daughter were left in straitened circumstances.

Yorick was to be no exception to the long roll of pleasant men who set tables in a roar, but who die and leave not a shilling. His debts were £1100 — upon which must be reckoned that burnt-down vicarage of Sutton, whose rebuilding had been put off until too late. There was no will — which was to be expected. The widow took out administration — just as Roger Sterne's widow had — on June the fourth: and Doctor Topham, the hero of the 'Good Warm Watch Coat,' was the official who received the fees from her.

As a first step, everything at Coxwould was sold. The books — the same I suppose which he got 'dirt-cheap' many years before — were sent to Messrs Todd & Sotheran, of

York, booksellers, who had succeeded Hillyard in Stonegate, and the auction catalogue of those gentlemen, containing 'the valuable library of the late Rev. Mr Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*,' turned up at a public sale not long since. But, taken together, his 'effects' did not produce more than £400. Creditors began to press. Mrs Sterne had a little estate of forty pounds a year settled on herself; and out of this pittance they undertook to honour Mr Sterne's memory and discharge the balance of seven hundred. A well-meant, but unmeaning tribute, as any business friend could have told them. The Rev. Mr Cheap began to press them about the burnt-down parsonage, and instituted a suit for dilapidations — which they had to compromise. This was brought on them by the carelessness of Mr Sterne's curate, and should, in fairness, be deducted from his own proper liabilities; which leaves his personal debts at a not very extravagant figure.

But the Yorkshire people, hearing of their distress, and perhaps as a tribute to the late Mr Yorick, came generously to their assistance; and at the great York races in the August of the same year, a handsome col-

lection was made, amounting to eight hundred pounds. Even in the shape of this last tribute to his memory, there was something Shandean. The appeal is made upon a race-ground, and to the crowd that spreads over a race-ground!

This aid set them a little at their ease, and at last enabled them to go up to London, where they had lodgings in Gerrard Street, Soho, at Mr Williams', paper merchant. They had brought a bundle of Mr Sterne's old sermons, most likely those 'sweepings of his study' he had put aside as least worthy of publication. Becket* had given them 'a trifle' for the copyright, but they hoped by getting subscriptions, which would come to them exclusively, to make up a handsome sum.

Mr Wilkes was now in London, and Miss

* [The posthumous sermons were published by Strahan. The following autograph letter of Lydia Sterne to Strahan may refer to the sermons, or, as it is undated, to the correspondence of Sterne that finally appeared in 1775.

"I enclose you Mr Beckett's proposal — when he last offer'd 400*l.* for the copyright he insisted on no such terms as these — this affair of not offering them to anyone else must be managed with the greatest caution — for you see he says that he will not take them if offer'd elsewhere. He will be judge of the quantity and quality — & insists on a year's credit. All these points my mother and myself most earnestly desire you to consider — unless you could be pretty sure of getting us more than 400*l.* the offering them might perhaps come to Beckett's knowledge — yet believe me S^r^ we had rather anyone had them than Becket — he is a *dirty fellow.*"]

Lydia wrote to him from Gerrard Street a quiet, humble letter, asking his patronage and influence with distinguished friends. It began: — 'Mrs and Miss Sterne's compliments wait on Mr Wilkes. They intend doing themselves the honour of calling upon him if not disagreeable. . . . They would not intrude, but they should be happy to see a person whom they honour, and whom Mr Sterne greatly admired. Not to have a melancholy story to tell when they meet, Miss Sterne begs leave to tell it now in a few words.' A very simple and artless letter, and this last stroke was unconsciously very happily suited to a man of Wilkes's rough and busy character, who would not like to look forward to a dismal interview.

He saw them, promised them his aid, and took up the project with enthusiasm. He undertook to write the life of his departed friend. They were to give him all letters and materials. So had he undertaken the life of his dear friend Churchill. Hall Stevenson was also written to, and agreed to join in the undertaking. A work of this kind, as Miss Sterne wrote later, by 'two men of such genius,' was certain to sell. All this

being arranged, and having promised Mr Wilkes, who seems to have been interested in Miss Sterne, to write to him, they left London for France, the country they both liked.

Wilkes had received them cordially, and with that 'effusion' and lavish fund of promises which was his characteristic. He would do everything. That a daughter should have been anxious that her father's career should have been set forth by the pens of two such professed debauchees and writers of scandalous works shows a want of discretion amounting to folly. The promise, however, was to be as vain as the performance would have been eccentric. Wilkes went into details, and suggested that the daughter should ornament the work with drawings. It was also intended to add his Letters; and though she felt that these were not of a description that ought to be given to the public, as they would do no credit to his memory, Miss Lydia flippantly announced that if the publisher seemed cool as to the whole project, he was to be tempted by the offer of the Correspondence.

The ladies set off for France and fixed

themselves at Angoulême. Lydia wrote to her new patron from that city in a strain that contrasts curiously with her previous obsequiousness. Her whole character as 'an accomplished little slut' seems to be revealed in this communication, and there is a pertness and affectation of smartness which does not predispose us in her favour. But not a word from Mr Wilkes. She wrote from M. Bologne's in the Rue Cordeliers, on July 22, 1769. Nothing can be more subdued and humble than the curiously jumbled topics:

'DEAR SIR, — 'Tis with the greatest pleasure I take my pen to fulfil the promise I made you the last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. I mean that of writing to you, and to give you an account of us and of our situation. A correspondent like Mr Wilkes gives your humble servant more vanity than I thought I was capable of. I am an inch taller to-day than I was yesterday. I wish the French may not find a difference in my behaviour — *ce sera bien pire.* When I receive a letter from you, they certainly will say, "*Peste! que cette fille est aujourd'hui dans ces grands airs!*

Décampons au plus vîte." This is supposing you will favour me with an answer, else I have done wrong to style you "correspondent:" but I know you are polite, and never want what the French call *égards pour les femmes: encore moins, je m'imagine, vis-à-vis les filles.*

'You expected an English letter, and not a *pot pourri.* I will not write one word more of French. I know not why I do, for I am no very great admirer of the language: 'tis better calculated for nonsense than my own; and consequently suits me better to write, though not Mr Wilkes to read. Thank my stars, you promised me not to show my letters to anyone, not even to your confessor — remember that.

'Now, as to our journey, — nothing either agreeable in it or diverting, I promise you. A journey through France (that is to say, the posting part of it) cannot be a *Sentimental* one; for it is one continued squabble with innkeepers and postilions! yet not like Smelfungus, who never kept his temper; for we kept ours, and laughed whilst we scolded. — How much the French have the advantage over us! They give themselves

ease by swearing; which, you know, is talking bawdy. We English women do not know how to set about it; yet, as archbishops in France swear as well as their neighbours (for I have heard them, to my edification), I cannot see why we women may not follow their example. The French women, however, do it *sans façon*. Again!—scratch out the words *sans façon* yourself, and put an English one in the place, which I will hereafter adopt.

'Angoulême is a pretty town: the country most delightful, and from the principal walk there is a very fine prospect; a serpentine river, which joins the Garonne at Bourdeaux, has a very good effect; trees in the middle of it, which form little islands, where the inhabitants go and take the *fresco:*—in short, 'tis a most pleasant prospect; and I know no greater pleasure than sitting by the side of the river, reading Milton or Shakespeare to my mother. Sometimes I take my guitar and sing to her. Thus do the hours slide away imperceptibly; with reading, writing, drawing, and music.

"Thus wisely careless, innocently gay,
We play the trifle life away."

Yet, dear Sir, often do we wish ourselves in England. Necessity sent us hither; may Fortune bring us back!

'We receive much civility from the people here. We had letters of recommendation, which I would advise every English person to procure wherever he goes in France. We have visitors, even more than we wish — as we ever found the French in general very insipid. I would rather choose to converse with people much superior to me in understanding (that I grant I can easily do, so you need not smile). With the one I can have no improvement, but with people of sense I am sure of learning something every hour; as being intimate with a person of an excellent heart and sensible feelings mends sometimes one's own.

'Tis now time to remind Mr Wilkes of his kind promise — to exhort him to fulfil it. If you knew, dear Sir, how much we are straitened as to our income, you would not neglect it. We should be truly happy to be so much obliged to you that we may join, to our admiration of Mr Wilkes in his public character, tears of gratitude whenever we hear his name mentioned, for the peculiar

service he has rendered us. Much shall we owe to Mr Hall for that and many other favours; but to you do we owe the kind intention which we beg you to put in practice. As I know Mr Hall is somewhat lazy, as you were the promoter, write to him yourself: he will be more attentive to what you say....

'I fear I have wore out your patience. Forgive me, 'twas a pleasing occupation to write to you. I know not whether it is impertinent to ask you if your affairs go on equal to the wishes of your friends? That they may, believe me, is the sincere wish of,

'Dear Sir,

'Your most faithful, obliged friend,

'L. STERNE.

'*P. S.* — We flatter ourselves you are well. My mother joins in most cordial wishes for your welfare and happiness. May everything you wish be granted you! as I am sure you will grant us ours; nay, you even *prevented it.*

'Once more, adieu!

'Our best compliments wait on Miss Wilkes.'

Mr Wilkes had, however, sufficient on his hands. He was harassed with difficulties and

shut up in the King's Bench Prison. But then he had, at least, leisure and opportunity to have replied. Some three months went by. No reply came, and Lydia again appealed to him:—

'How long have I waited' (she wrote in October) 'for a letter from Mr Wilkes in answer to that I wrote him. I fear he is not well; I fear his own affairs have not allowed him time to answer me; in short, I am full of fears. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Three lines, with a promise of writing Tristram's life, for the benefit of his widow and daughter, would make us happy. A promise, did I say? that I already have: but a second *assurance.* Indeed, my dear Sir, since I last wrote we stand more in need of such an act of kindness. Panchaud's failure has hurt us considerably: we have, I fear, lost more than, in our circumstances, we could afford to lose. Do not, I beseech you, disappoint us: let me have a single line from you, "I will perform my promise," and joy will take place of our sorrow. I trust you will write to Hall; in pity, do.

'Adieu, dear Sir! May you enjoy all the

happiness you deserve! may every wish of yours be granted, as I am sure you will grant my request! My mother joins in best compliments. Our most cordial wishes attend you and the amiable Miss Wilkes. — Believe me, most truly, your faithful friend, and obedient, humble servant, L. STERNE.'

Again no answer was returned to this appeal. At the same time she addressed a reminder to the proposed coadjutor, Mr Hall Stevenson, who also took no notice. Six months went by, and, despairing of hearing from Wilkes, she wrote again to Stevenson: —

'If you ever felt' (she says) 'what hope deferred occasions, you would not have put us under that painful situation; from whom the neglect arises I know not, but surely a line from you, dear Sir, would not have cost you much trouble. Tax me not with boldness for using the word *neglect*: as you both promised, out of the benevolence of your hearts, to write my father's Life for the benefit of his widow and daughter, and as I myself look on a promise as sacred, and I doubt not but you think as I do; in that case the word is not improper. In

short, dear Sir, I ask but this of you; to tell me by a very short letter, whether we may depend on yours and Mr Wilkes's promise, or if we must renounce the pleasing expectation. But, dear Sir, consider that the fulfilling of it may put 400*l.* into our pockets; and that the declining it would be unkind, after having made us hope and depend upon that kindness. Let this plead my excuse.

'If you do not choose to take the trouble to wait on Mr Wilkes, send him my letter, and let me know the *oui ou le non.* Still let me urge, press, and entreat Mr Hall to be as good as his word: if he will interest himself in our behalf, 'twill but be acting consistent with his character; 'twill prove that Eugenius was the friend of Yorick — nothing can prove it stronger than befriending his widow and daughter. — Adieu, dear Sir! — Believe me your most obliged, humble servant, L. STERNE.

'My mother joins in best compliments.'

As was to be expected, neither of the gentlemen performed what they had undertaken to do. Indeed it may be doubted if

they had the gifts for such a task. So a rather pretty edition of the works appeared, and without a life.

Thus left to their own resources, the daughter proceeded to arrange her father's letters, and published them in due course. Nothing could be more indiscreet than the editing, though there is an apparent attempt at suppressing names, etc. Two or three of the letters, as we have seen, are fatally damaging to Sterne's reputation, and drove, as it were, the last nail into its coffin. But they are curious from another point of view.

It has been mentioned that Sterne kept a letter-book, but it will be interesting here to show how the artful humorist studied and prepared and re-cast his letters before sending them forth: —

'*P. S.* — I have just received as a present from a right Honble. a most elegant gold snuff-box — fabricated for me at Paris — I wish Eliza was here — I would lay it at her feet — however, I will enrich my gold Box with her picture — and if the Donor does not approve of such an acquisition to his pledge of friendship — I will send him his Box again.

'May I presume to enclose you the letter I write to Mrs Draper? I know you will write yourself, and my letter may have the honour to chaperon yours to India. Mrs Sterne and my daughter are coming to stay a couple of months with, as far as from Avignion — and then return — Here's Complaisance for you — I went 500 miles the last spring out of my way to pay my wife a week's visit — and she is at the expense of coming post a thousand miles to return it! What a happy pair! however, en passant she takes back sixteen hundred pds. into France with her, and will do me the honour likewise to strip me of everything I have — except Eliza's Picture — adieu.

'To Mrs James, in Gerard Street,
'Free Fauconberg. Soho, London.'

The published version is as follows:

'*P.S.* — I have just received, as a present from a man I shall ever love, a most elegant gold snuff-box, fabricated for me at Paris — 'tis not the first pledge I have received of his friendship. May I presume to enclose you a letter of chit-chat which I shall write to Eliza? I know you will write yourself, and my letter

may have the honour to *chaperon* yours to India — they will neither of them be the worse received for going together in company, but I fear they will get late in the year to their destined port, as they go first to Bengal.'

The postscript of the published letter is certainly tame and colourless as compared with Mr Gibbs's version. It was quite excusable in the 'sprightly' Lydia, as editor of her father's correspondence, to omit the sarcastic allusion to his wife and daughter's impending visit, or to cut out the dedication of its golden shrine to Eliza's miniature. Yet why the 'Rt. Honble.,' probably Sir G. Macartney, should be sentimentalised into 'a man I shall ever love,' one cannot quite discover.

And again: An undated draft letter from Sterne in Bond Street to Mr and Mrs James. This rough copy letter seems to have been expanded into the published letter to Mr and Mrs James, written from Old Bond Street, and dated April 21st, 176 (No. 93). This last is too long to quote at length, but we may compare its more material portion:

'I fell ill the moment I got to my lodgings —he (the physician) says it is owing to my

taking James's Powder, and venturing out on so cold a day as Sunday — but he is mistaken, for I am certain whatever bears the name must have efficacy with me.'

Now for Mr Gibbs's draft, which runs in the third person : —

'Mr Sterne's kindest and most friendly compliments to Mrs James, with his most sentimental thanks for her obliging enquiry after his health — he fell ill the moment he got to his lodgings, and has been attended by a physician ever since. He says 'tis owing to Mr Sterne's taking James's Powder, and venturing out on so cold a day — but Mr Sterne could give a truer account. He is almost dead, yet still hopes to glide like a shadow to Gerard Street in a few days, to thank his good friend for her good will. All compliments to Mr James, and all comfort to his good lady.'

Observe here that the punning compliment on the name James did not strike Sterne till he was making his second copy of the note.

These and other such details were communicated by Mr Gibbs to the editor of the *Athenæum*.

Sterne, as we have seen, took the trouble of keeping an elaborate journal to amuse his Eliza. When writing this account of Sterne, I was struck by Mr Thackeray's allusion—in one of his 'Roundabout Papers' to 'the gentleman of Bath,' who offered to show him Sterne's private journal kept for Eliza. Strange to say, the novelist thought this curious record of slight importance, and made no use of it. A literary friend of his and my own was kind enough to ask him about this matter, to whom he wrote this explanation:—

'PALACE GARDENS, KENSINGTON, W.
'*Mar.* 9, 1868.

'I forget the name of the Bath gentleman who lent me Sterne's lying MS. journal to Mrs Draper. He writes to Eliza that he was dreadfully ill, had so much blood taken from him, but nevertheless was ever and ever his Eliza's. In the printed letters—this is one—(a plague on the people. I have been looking a ½ hour in vain for my Sterne)—addressed from the Mount Coffee House to a Lady P—— without any date—he makes tremendous love to her, blasphemes about the Lord, and being led into temptation, and

winds up by saying if she would let him come to drink tea he will go to Miss C.'s benefit that night. I looked out in the Theatrical Register (pardon forgetting date, name and so forth) on what day in 176 — what d'ye callem — a Miss C—— had a benefit. I found it was on the very day when Sterne was writing to Mrs Draper to say he was dreadfully ill.

'Then there is the lie in Dutens' *Memoirs*, which I quoted in a Roundabout Paper. All which didn't prevent the scamp from being a great man.' *

Three years later we find mother and daughter settled at Alby, an old town in Languedoc, probably seeking a still cheaper manner of living. M. Stapfer, who has written with much critical sagacity on Sterne's works and character, has discovered that here they moved in the best society of the place, and were well appreciated.

At this point, the accounts of Lydia's history usually end, there being no more known of her, save a dim tradition that she married a Frenchman, and was one of the victims of

* [For further details, consult the "Introduction" to the *Journal to Eliza*. The lie related by Dutens is given among the anecdotes in the first volume of *Letters and Miscellanies*.]

the Revolution. It is now ascertained that at Alby she became acquainted with a young man of the name of Alexander Anne Medalle, a son of a 'Receveur des Décimes' in the Customs. From the 'Acts' of the town it appears, that on April 28, 1772, she abjured the Protestant religion in the private chapel of the Provost's house, and on the same day was married to the young man, who was a year younger than herself—her mother being too ill to be present.

In the Registers is a most remarkable entry which invites speculation. 'The marriage was imperative (*forcé*) and urgent:' on which, in the Inventaire des Archives d'Alby, is found this gloss: 'For at that period the law authorised *la recherche de la paternité*.' The first impression from this would be unfavourable to Miss Lydia's character, and Lord Howden (in a letter to the *Athenæum*) quotes the altered rule from the Code Napoléon in support of this view; but it seems too harsh and ungracious a conclusion to be accepted on such evidence. The following solution is not improbable. Mrs Sterne was ill, probably in danger of death, for she died a few months later. In case of her death, the difficulty of

proving consent of parents and guardians would be increased, and the countries being at war, the *recherche de la paternité* would be impossible. The French law is, or used to be, very strict in requiring such formalities. There is certainly obscurity in the matter, and we must not condemn Lydia too hastily.*

Mrs Sterne died in January 1778, at a Dr Lioncière's house in the town, No. 9 Rue St Antoine. It must be said that during her somewhat troubled course, she carried out, in an ungracious way perhaps, correct and respectable principles of conduct. That publication of the Letters which her daughter had once hinted at, was not attempted during her lifetime. In June 1775, Mrs de Medalle was in London for the purpose of publishing these papers, in which her father confesses that he 'was more sick of his wife than ever,' with other indecorous confessions. Such is the story of Sterne and his daughter.

* [On this passage, consult the notes on *Sterne's Daughter* in the *Athenæum* for June 18, and July 2, 1870. The "solution" offered by Mr Fitzgerald is fanciful.]

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

YORICK'S JOURNAL * (page 215)

SOME further extracts from this strange record — which I believe it is intended to publish — will be interesting. I am afraid it must be said that the journal leaves our humorist with scarcely a shred of character; it is a pitiful, undignified display of meanness, deception and disloyalty to his wife. His only excuse is that he was in such a state of infatuation as to be scarcely conscious of what he was writing.

He was not, too, above turning his amatory sorrows to purposes of profit, and, it would seem from the introduction, actually designed publishing the strange incoherent 'screed.' It opens: —

'This journal, wrote under the fictitious names of Yorick and Eliza, and sometimes of the Bramin and the Bramine, but 'tis a diary of the miserable feelings of a person separated from a Lady, for whose society he languished. The real names are foreign, and the account a copy from a French Mans[t]. in Mrs S.'s hands — but wrote as it is to cast a Viel (Veil) over them. There is a counterpart, which is the lady's account of

* [The *Journal to Eliza* is printed entire in this edition of Sterne.]

what transactions daily happened, and what pursuits occupied her mind during this separation from her Admirer — these are worth reading; the translators cannot say so much in favour of Yorick's, which seem to have little merit beyond their truth.' In other words, Mr Sterne was about to 'make copy' of his agonies, passing it off as a translation from the French. To soothe his feelings he kept this confidential journal day by day. The fragment begins on Monday, April 13th, and the lady sailed on the 23d.* He is 'worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which I am eternally wasting and shall waste, till I see Eliza again.'

His only comfort was 'to sit and talk with the worthy James.'

'They sank my heart with an infamous account of Draper and his detested character at Bombay. For what a wretch art thou hazarding thy life . . . thou wilt be repaid with injuries and insults.' Then he heightened the picture with his own poignant sufferings and ailments. 'Poor, sick-headed, sick-hearted Yorick! Eliza has made a shadow of thee; I am absolutely good for nothing.' He was bled, but the bandage got loose. 'I half bled to death in bed before I felt it, Eliza — farewell to thee — *I am going*.' He did *not* 'go,' however — got better, and Mrs James comforted him in this way, — 'Tears ran down her cheeks when she saw how pale and wan I was. "I be-

* [This should be the 3d, although Sterne gives the date as the 23d.]

seech you, good soul," she said, "not to regard either difficulties, or expences, but to fly to Eliza directly. I see you will dye without her . . . save yourself for her." "Tell her, my dear friend, that I will meet her in a better world. . . . Tell Eliza, my dear friend that I dyed broken-hearted." She burst into a most pathetic flood of tears. You never beheld so affecting a scene. I had like to have fainted; it was with difficulty I could reach the street door.' All which was but part of the series of inventions and deceptions with which he strove to work on Eliza's feelings. The James's were not persons likely to say such things about the poor, absent Daniel Draper.

Mr Sterne was, no doubt, in bad health, but instead of moping despondingly, as he described himself, he was engaged in a racket of dissipation, having on one occasion, as he boasted, forty invitations! The letter to Lady P., of which Mr Thackeray made so much, was likely enough to have been written about this time.*

As we have seen, his wife and daughter were menacing him with a return, the very thought of which caused him almost ludicrous annoyance and misery. 'Pity my embarrassment — my wife with me every moment of the summer. Think what a restraint upon a *Fancy that should sport in all points at its ease*,' — an ingenious author's plea. 'It will be by stealth, if I am able to go on with my journal at all. You cannot con-

* [This letter was probably written two years earlier. See Letter CVIII.]

ceive how much and how universally I am pitied. My friends think it will kill me.' His only chance of escape was to buy them off. By June he was negotiating to sell 'my little estate to purchase peace to myself, and a certainty of never being interrupted by Mrs Sterne, who, when she is sensible I have given her all I can part with, she will be at rest herself.' This bit of property was certainly Mrs Sterne's own, which she had settled on him at their marriage. 'Nature,' he adds later, 'is turned upside down; for we have now wives going to visit their husbands, and taking long journies, *out of ill will.* I wish you was with him (Draper), for the same reason that I wish my wife was at Coxwould, that she might sooner depart in peace.' It will be seen that Mr Sterne does not disguise his aspirations. These grow with his *dementia*, and presently take grosser shape. With an incredible folly and lack of decency, he reminds his flame that Mrs Sterne had recently a paralytic stroke. Here was prospect of release. Growing bolder and more reckless, he now began to make some artful suggestions to Eliza. He drew up a fanciful paragraph, which might appear in the papers. 'Mr D——, dying in the year 17—, this lady returned to England, and Yorick, the year after becoming a widower, they were married, and retiring to one of his livings in Yorkshire, where was a most romantic situation, they lived and died happy.'

Still news of the threatening visitors was delayed. 'I sit in dread of to-morrow's post, which is to bring me an account when madame is to arrive.' He was in

torture and was 'pitied by every soul in proportion as *her character is detested* and her errand known.' The sum that was to secure the absence of the pair, was to be an annuity of £300, the £2000 for Lydia. But his friend Hall suggested that £1500 would be sufficient. 'The advice is well enough if I can get her off with it. I'll summon up the husband, if I can, and keep the £500 for emergencies. Who knows, Eliza, what sort of emergencies may cry out for it? I conceive some; you, Eliza, may conceive others.' (A Shandean turn it may be presumed.) 'Soothe me, calm me, pour thy healing balm into the sorest of hearts. I have a restless, unreasonable wife. She wants £400. *Bad woman!*'

Enlivened by this prospect, he proposes a little plan. 'What say you, Eliza? Shall we join our little capitals together? Well, if Mr Draper gives us leave, we may safely. If your virtue and honour are only concerned, 'twould be safe in Yorick's hands as in a Brother's.'

With this hopeful speculation, he lays out all kinds of plans. There should be new rooms built at the parsonage. He would meet her on the beach, on her arrival from Bombay, when he 'hoped to have everything planned that depends on me properly, *and for what depends upon Him who orders every event for us, I leave and trust it.*' This Stiggins-like sanctimoniousness is painful to read. The folly of the scheme was patent, for even were Mrs Sterne removed out of the way there still remained Daniel Draper. By an odd retribution the planner himself was the first of the quartette concerned to depart this life, or, in his own

phrase, 'this bale of cadaverous goods was consigned to Pluto.'

He supplies pictures of himself with 'a 100 hens and chickens about him,' and sitting down to venison and cards. 'I want you to be at the other side of my little table.' He was ever to be 'such as my honour, my engagements, and promises and desires have fixed me.'

APPENDIX B

SUPPOSED PLAGIARISMS *

DR FERRIAR proved that many of the strange and almost grotesque theories and speculations found in *Tristram*—the ludicrous maunderings of Mr Shandy, his plans, his conceits and reflections, which had excited so much laughter and astonishment, were all drawn from — Rabelais, Montaigne, Bouchet, Beroalde, Scarron, and, above all, Burton — whose works had served him as text-books. From Burton's strange book, known as the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, whole paragraphs had been taken, which, when placed side by side with the original, did not differ by a single word. The grief of Mr Shandy over his son, and his dismal reflections, the 'Lady Baussiere's' inattention to the importunate beggar, and much more, are all to be read, with a few trifling changes, in the *Anatomy*. And yet, though this has been the most insisted on of all Mr Sterne's pilferings, it really amounts almost to nothing, for those familiar with Burton know well that he himself is nothing but a patchwork — a mere

* [Consult the "Introduction" to the third volume of *Tristram Shandy* in this edition.]

'cento' of quotations, and the richest storehouse of scraps and gatherings from every quarter that is known; therefore, when Mr Sterne helped himself in this quarter, he did not take Burton, but merely what Burton had taken. Half-a-dozen pages would exhaust these pilferings.

The odd learning upon noses, and the allusion to that feature and its significance, must have struck one of Mr Sterne's tone of mind; and when he alludes to the supposed origin of 'soft noses' he had in his mind the grotesque conversation between Gargantua Grangousier and the monk in Rabelais. The point of Mr Shandy's remark to Obadiah when tasking him with the failure of his 'favourite mare,' is an old jest from the *Moyen de Parvenir*. The black page after Yorick's death is to be seen in Fludd's great *History of the World;* and the shower of dashes over many pages had been tried before; but to the wrong paging, the 'marbled pages,' and the flourish of Trim's stick, I believe he has the undisputed title. These were poor tricks, of which he was fully rich enough to have been independent.

It seemed almost as though he meant to have a sly Shandean joke at some of the detectives, who he knew would be presently on his track, when he worked a passage from Burton into *Tristram Shandy*, which dwelt on the fashion in which new writers help themselves from the old. 'As apothecaries,' said Burton, 'we make new mixtures every day, pour out of one vessel into another;' and again, 'we twist the same

rope again and again.' 'Shall we for ever,' said Sterne, 'make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out of one vessel into another? Are we for ever to be twisting and untwisting the same rope?'

Much stress, too, was laid on his adoption of the affecting passage from Burnet, as to the choice of an inn as a place to die in. But it should be remembered that Burnet reports it of Archbishop Leighton, and that Cicero had uttered the same wish before; and that it is an idea, which, under various shapes, has occurred to many who have found delight and comfort in an inn parlour. After all, there can be no copyright in ideas.

But the truth is, in all the Shandean classics there is a family likeness — they have virtually but the one stock in trade. All these French humorists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had common forms, as it were, of thought, and traditional jokes, which were passed on from one to the other. Their humour was of the grotesque and extravagant, — a limited range; and they seemed never to be tired of telling the same story with little variations of shape. As an instance, jesting on the nose was a favourite pastime; and odd speculations as to its relation to character, and what influences determined its length in some men, its breadth in others, gave scope to the strangest and most comic theories. The department relating to noses, the satires, essays, and burlesque disquisitions, in Latin, French and Italian, fill a large shelf in the macaronic library.

APPENDIX B

The idea of an eccentric father debating over the education of his son, and laying out Utopian schemes and odd plans for the formation of his mind, may be traced to Martinus Scriblerus, from Scriblerus to Montaigne, and from Montaigne back to Pantagruel. We have the crotchets of Mr Shandy imported into real life, in the curious theories of the father of Miss Edgeworth.

Lovers of Sterne will, however, regret that at least three of his most charming thoughts should not have been his own. We must give up Uncle Toby's fly — the pretty bit of consolation to Maria, 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb'* — and what is the greatest sacrifice, Captain Shandy's famous recording angel. The fly, according to Balzac, was originally put out of the window by James the First of England, who made a remark exactly the same as that of Uncle Toby. His 'shorn lamb' is found in a Languedoc proverb, and there is a very similar thought in the '*Outlandish Proverbs*, selected by Mr G. H., 1640.' 'To a close-shorne sheepe God gives wind by measure.' And the famous recording angel has a parallel in a MS. by a monk Alberic, who lived about the year 1100. 'A demon holds a book in which are written the sins of a particular man, and an angel drops on it from a phial a tear which the sinner had shed in doing a good action, and his sins are washed out.' Sterne's thought

* Many pious persons have supposed that this is to be found in the Scripture, and a clergyman is said to have actually preached a sermon upon that text.